RETROACTION

ISSUE ONE SPRING 2009

LEGEND OF WUKONG

New Sega Mega Drive / Genesis game reviewed

Plus an interview with Super Fighter Team, the developer/publisher behind the project

RETRO REMAKES COMPETITION 2008

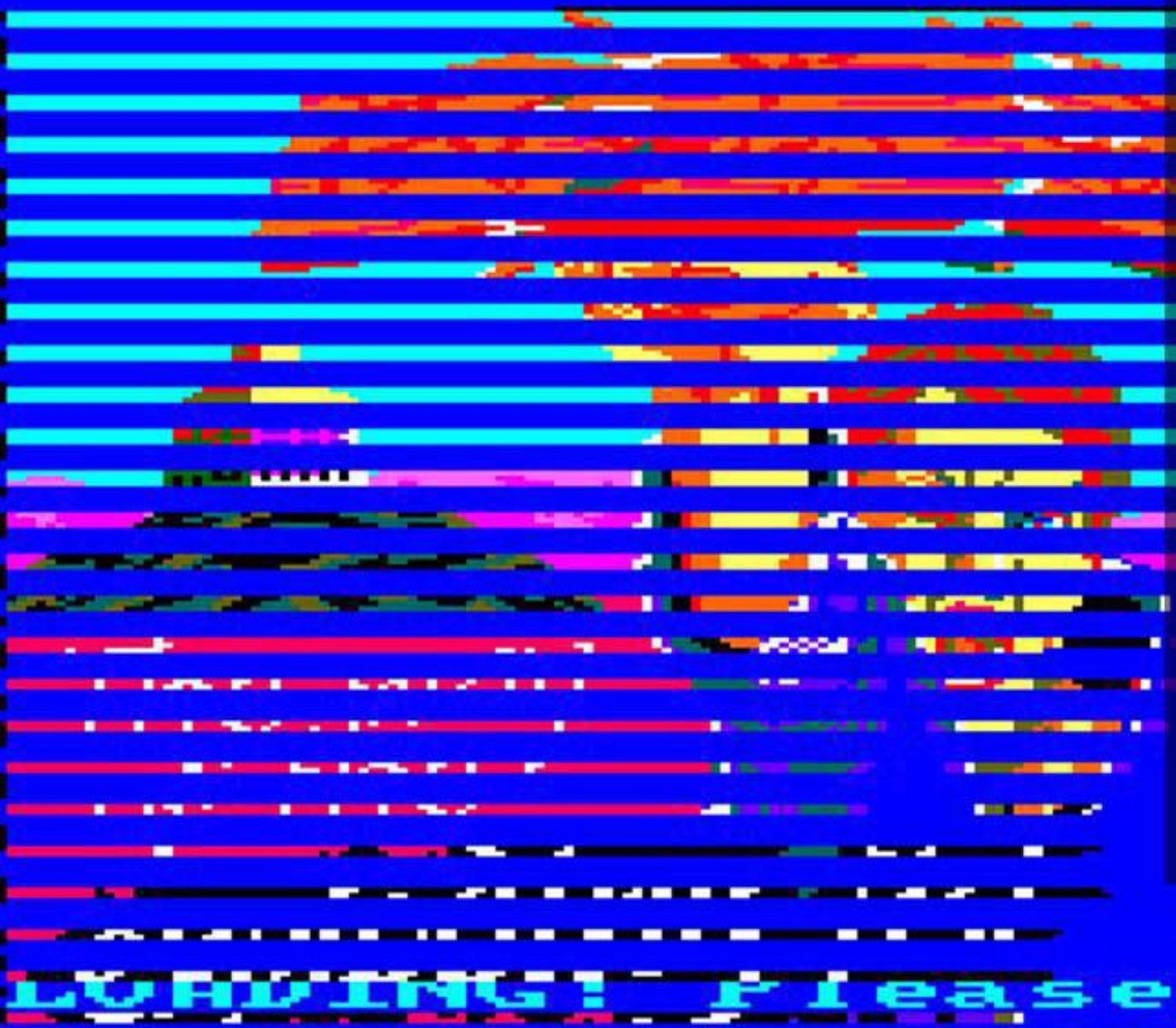
The categories, the games!

ZENOBI

We talk to the people behind one of the UK's most popular adventure publishers

DOSBOX

We take a look at the ultimate DOS emulator



retroaction. re‘tro‘ac´tion (plural re‘tro‘ac´tions). noun.

1. Any action that has an influence due to a past event

How very apt that definition is regarding retrogaming and our new digital retro games magazine in particular.

Some readers, especially Amstrad CPC fans, may remember the *Amstrad Action* tribute magazine, which is where we envisaged the *Retroaction* name plus many of the features in this magazine.

To produce a magazine with such diverse content, an array of experienced gamers from around the globe has been assembled to work on *Retroaction*. We will waffle on about retro games from all platforms whether they are good, bad, or ugly. There will also be a smattering of reviews, interviews, and anything else that we feel is appropriate. Just look at the line up on the very next page to get an idea of what we’re about.

We have taken full advantage of the magazine’s digital format, so it’s fully interactive: the contents page is linked with the relevant features (see an article you want to read? Just click on the contents page entry and voila), all internet links are hyperlinked (one click sends you to the website), reviews have links to the game’s ROM, there’s also a link to the appropriate emulator, and if you need to get in touch with any of us, or to let us know what you think of the magazine, then *Retroaction* staff are just one click away from an email. You can also air your opinions or join in on the retro discussions on our website’s forum: www.retroactionmagazine.com/forum.

The journey to get here has been long and the journey ahead will be longer still; this is just the beginning.

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to *Retroaction*.

The *Retroaction* team

RETROACTION

EDITOR
Neil Reive

DEPUTY EDITOR
Gnome

DESIGNER
Neil Reive

CONTRIBUTORS
Duncan Rule

Mark Hall

Richard Goulstone

Duffman

"You wake up one day and find it's all been a dream or you wake up and discover you've been asleep all the time and the nightmare is real."

www.retroactionmagazine.com

retroaction-magazine.blogspot.com

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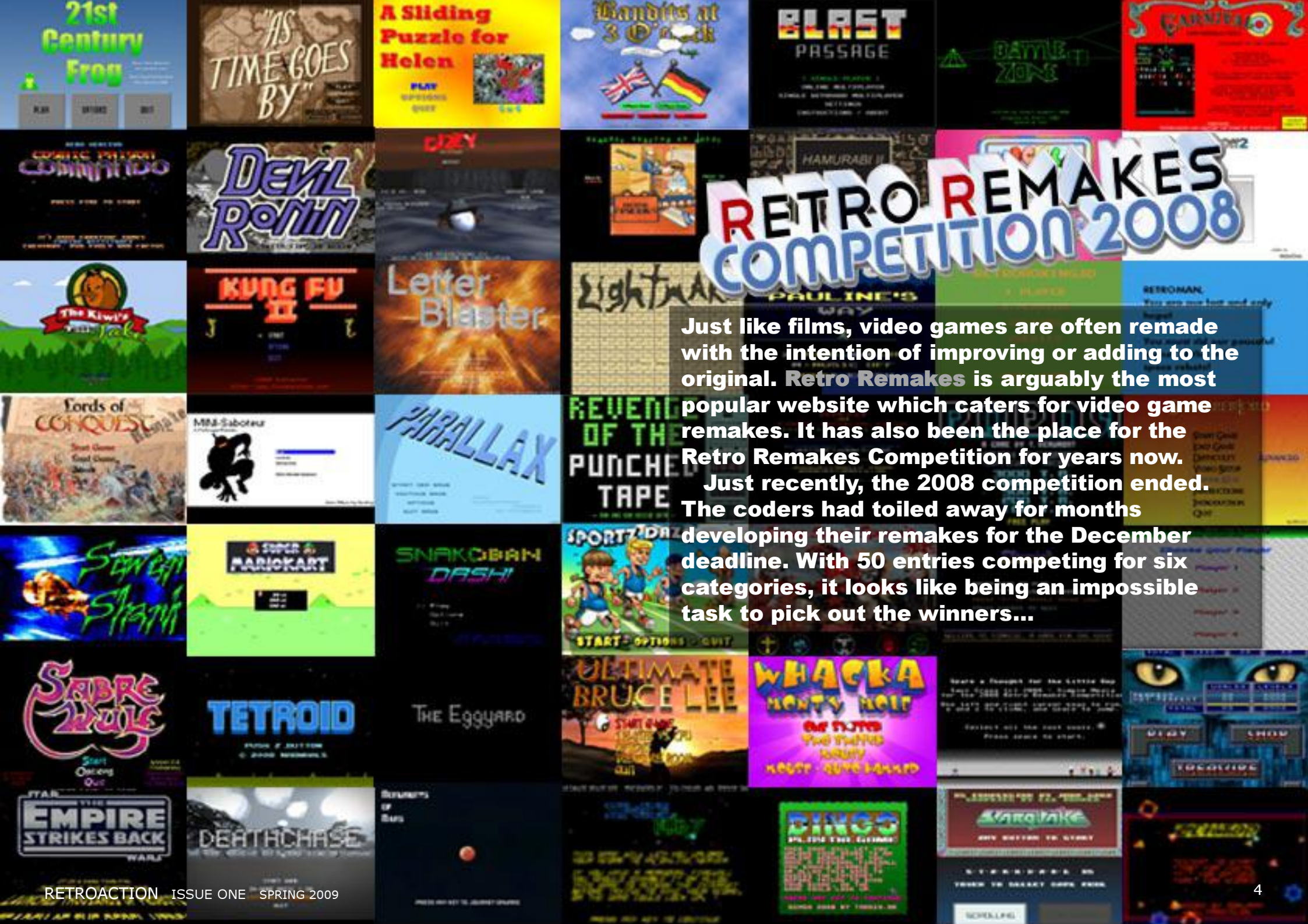


Just like films, video games are often remade with the intention of improving or adding to the original. Retro Remakes is arguably the most popular website which caters for video game remakes. It has also been the place for the Retro Remakes Competition for years now.

Just recently, the 2008 competition ended. The coders had toiled away for months developing their remakes for the December deadline. With 50 entries competing for six categories, it looks like being an impossible task to pick out the winners...

DEATHCHASE

Developer James Kett **Platform** PC **Download** N/A **Genre** Shoot-'em-up **Category** Retro Remakes

Deathchase is—if there is still one person out there that doesn't know—a remake of the 1983 ZX Spectrum classic *3D Deathchase*. Originally written by Mervyn Estcourt for Micromega, the game was one of the first examples of 3D first person perspective. The response to the game was unbelievable, from gamers to magazines; they all praised it for its speed and playability.

Despite playing the Amstrad CPC conversion last year, and now the PC remake, I still don't know what the hell is going on plot wise. All I do know is that the game takes place over several stages with both day and night patrols. You are informed of a number of intruders in the forest and it's your job as commander of a high-speed pursuit motorbike to hunt them down.

The difficulty level can be set to easy, normal or hard and you start the game with three lives. The bike is controlled using the mouse. Now you may think that using the mouse for a racing game is rather silly, but once you get used to the mouse controls it becomes second nature. Holding the right mouse button accelerates the bike, while releasing it slows you down. Moving the mouse left or right moves the bike in the corresponding direction.

As you speed through the forest you will soon come across enemy bikers, which can be taken out with the bike's laser gun by pressing the left button. Taking out the necessary number of intruders will take you to further stages, which gradually get tougher with more trees to dodge and more—faster—enemy bikers.

Points are gained according to the difficulty level and are given for destroying enemy bikers and completing a stage. However, ten points are deducted for every laser shot you fire, so careful usage of the gun will ensure a good score. Receive a high score and you can enter your name on the high score table.

I played the Amstrad CPC version, which is almost an exact replica of the Spectrum game, and I wasn't very impressed with the game at all. The graphics were monochromatic, the sound was pretty poor, and the gameplay wasn't that great. However, the remake seems to eliminate all these problems. The PC's graphics are by no means top of the range—they can get quite blocky at times—but are adequate, and the trees blur by smoothly when zooming through the forest.

Sound is covered well with an excellent incidental soundtrack: the faster you go the more upbeat the music gets. Spot sound effects are also handled well with laser gun effects and explosions accompanying the visuals. The gameplay itself is fast furious fun and it is frightfully scary speeding through the forest in the pitch dark.

If you liked the original then you will no doubt love this remake; even if you hated the original, then this version might just change your opinion.

If you thought the day-time mission was hard then wait 'til you see the night mission. Jeez

You really feel the speed as you zip through the forest...

...no, you really do, just look at the trees blurring. Oh, there's an enemy biker

Damn! Crashed into a tree, again. Erm, I mean the enemy whacked me from behind...

One life left—indicated by the single yellow light on the bike—so I better make it count

THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Developer MinionSoft **Platform** PC **Download** N/A **Genre** Shoot-'em-up **Category** Retro Remakes

Once again, the fate of the Rebels lies in the capable hands of Luke Skywalker and Han Solo as they fly across the frozen wastes of the planet Hoth to bring the evil Empire to its knees.

Many of you will have seen the film and played the games which followed. Having produced a remake of the first *Star Wars* arcade game, MinionSoft decided to continue with the great franchise and bring us a remake of the classic Atari arcade game from 1985.

The game sees you playing as Luke fighting off the onslaught of imperial probe droids homing in on the rebel base's location. It's your mission to destroy them before they discover the power generator.

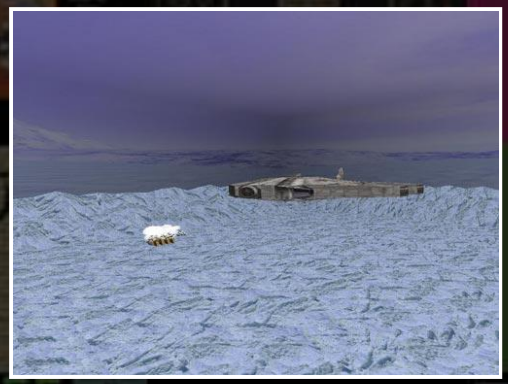
Taking control of a snow speeder, you then have to battle against the advancing AT-AT and AT-ST walkers. These beasts are virtually indestructible, but fortunately have a couple of weak spots. With a Tie Attack and Asteroid Belt sections later, the game is a faithful remake of the original.

The ultimate aim is to help Luke gain full Jedi status and to do this you have to destroy a number of targets. Each time the targets are destroyed you will earn a letter from the word JEDI.

Controls are very flexible and the game can be played with the mouse, joystick, gamepad, or keyboard. Options are numerous with plenty of configurations available.

The graphics are a huge leap from the original's wire frame blocky efforts, but show some rough edges-probably due to the hurriedness of the development.

Sound is also impressive with some sampled voices and effects from the film itself. My only concern is that the fun is over rather quickly.



The famous opening scroll—where you can't read it until half way through—recreated in all its glory

Stage one and the probes are causing a few problems

Fighting against four star destroyers, are you insane?

I had one of these—the toy model that is—and the missus called it a dog. Ha-ha, etc.

But don't laugh at them for too long as they pack a mean punch. Ouch, I felt that whiz by my ear

SUPER MARIO KART

Developer Grindalf **Platform** PC **Download** N/A **Genre** Racing game **Category** Retro Remakes

In last place, but it can be quite easy to catch up on the pack

Watch it on this level as one wrong move and you're over the edge

Okay, so I'm in last place again. I blame the mud—it slows you down

Another tricky little level with water hazards on every corner

Super Mario Kart on the Super Nintendo was a revelation in the early 90s. Gamers loved it and magazine journos loved it. Everyone loved it and why not, it is an excellent game. Using their most popular video game characters, Nintendo created one of the best games of the nineties, which excelled due to its multiplayer action and additional features.

The main speed options are 50 cc, 100 cc, and 150 cc, which determine the speed and difficulty of the game. There are three tournaments to compete in: the mushroom cup, flower cup, and star cup. Each tournament takes place over five different tracks. Your final race order determines the amount of points you win and the points are tallied up during the tournament. The player with the most points at the end of all five tracks wins the tournament and the cup.

Controlling the racing karts around the tracks is done by using the directional arrow keys. Up accelerates, down reverses, while left and right turns the kart in the corresponding direction. Items can be picked up from the question mark boxes, which include banana skins, green shells, red shells, mushrooms, coins and stars. Pressing the space bar activates an item: banana skins can be dropped for trailing racers to skid on, and green shells can be used as a weapon against racers in front.

When racing against the others you will no doubt come in contact with them. When this happens, you will lose a coin, but if you haven't got any coins then you will spin, which can get really annoying if it happens right at the start. However, there are plenty of coins scattered around the racecourses for you to pick up.

The game certainly looks good and the graphics move smooth enough around the courses, however, there is noticeable slowdown at certain points. Sound is all right, but hardly an improvement on the original. One minor niggle is that there is no joystick/pad support, which, considering the SNES uses one, is quite a disappointment.

Due to the time constraints of the Retro Remakes competition, and the late start Grindalf had, several features had to be dropped. These included a two player split screen, enemy powers, battle mode, a map, jumping, special cup, and the Donkey Kong character. Just imagine what may have been if all these were implemented into the game. If ifs and buts, etc. As it stands, *Super Mario Kart Remake* is an admittedly flawed, but fun game.

Fighting with Luigi for first place. Just hope I don't skid off the icy track

COSMIC PRISON COMMANDO

Developer Carnivac Games **Platform** PC **Download** One level demo **Genre** Shoot-'em-up **Video clip** YouTube **Category** We Like It

The Turrican influences become apparent immediately

He, he. The power up is an icon of the Amstrad CPC464. Nice touch

Jack lets rip with his standard weapon as the enemy approach

Three-way gunfire. Look at the lighting effect on Jack. Excellent

The Amstrad CPC style graphics have been replicated perfectly

Developed for the Retro Remakes 2008 contest, *C.P.C.* was entered into the 'We Like It Retro' category (a new game with a retro style). While this is essentially a new game developed on the PC game, the retro style chosen is very much Amstrad CPC from around 1989; it uses the CPC's 16 colours on screen from a palette of 27. The name *Cosmic Prison Commando* is also a reference to the CPC itself and the game's level design has been created with obvious influences from the likes of the *Turrican* series.

Due to time constraints, *C.P.C.* was not completed in time for the Retro Remakes compo deadline, hence why this is the demo version we're looking at. So what we have here is one level with most of the features hidden or removed. Some of the things Carnivac had to remove include the options menu, a death animation, boss enemies, and extra weapons.

The plot of *Cosmic Prison Commando* is not really known—the intro screen is currently disabled—but the aim of the demo is to get to the end of the level, negotiating around the map area, shooting the enemies, collecting power ups.

For the demo, controls can be configured in the config file (0 for keyboard and 1 for joystick), as can the scanline options (1 is solid, 0 is invisible and 0.5 is a compromise). For the moment the game can only be played full screen, which isn't really any bother to be honest.

The controls are fairly easy and are probably designed for use with a joystick/keyboard combo, although you can use a gamepad. There's the usual walk, jump, crouch movements, but there is also the ability to break through thin platforms by crouching down and pressing the jump key.

Certain coloured doors block your path so you will need to find the matching colour device and destroy it to open these doors. Collecting orbs will give you extra points (one hundred will gain you an extra life). The weapons in the game include your standard blaster and a multiple shot, which are upgradeable through picking up the relevant ammo icons. As mentioned, a third weapon is not working for the demo, but should be ready for the completed game, as will smart bombs and weapon maximum upgrades. It is a great demo all the same, and if Carnivac can complete the game in the near future, then he will have a brilliant little game on his hands.

ULTIMATE BRUCE LEE

Developer Trevor (Smila) Storey & Stuart Collier **Platform** PC **Download** Release **Genre** Beat-'em-up **Category** Retro Remakes

With so many options and mini games, UBL will keep you busy

The remake's graphics are really lush and smoothly animated

Originally released on the Atari home computers in the mid 1980s, *Bruce Lee* was received well by many and ports to other home computers quickly followed. Using the name of world famous martial arts guru, many would have thought that the game would be lacklustre, but that was not to be the case. Now we have a remake of this old classic from Trevor Storey and Stuart Collier.

Set in ancient Japan, the player takes on the role of Bruce Lee as he searches out the secrets of eternal life and fabulous riches. The one man who possesses this secret is an evil wizard who lives high up on Mount Fuji in a fortified palace. The palace is guarded by two of the Far East's most fearsome warriors: the huge green Yamo and the Ninja.

Bruce can run and jump around the platforms and fall without too much harm. There are also many things that he can use to climb including ladders, trellises, and frames to get to the upper platforms. In each of the screens, you must collect the hanging lanterns, which gains access to the lower levels via a hatch that opens.

Bruce can defend himself against Yamo and the Ninja with punches, flying kicks and by ducking. Yamo is a particularly dangerous enemy to confront and will only be temporally defeated with three knockdowns. The Ninja takes only two hits, but is more agile and will dodge your attacks and fight back with his sword. They both track you relentlessly throughout the game.

You start the game with four falls (lives) and three knockdowns by the enemy or a hit by a hazard loses a fall. Other dangers await Bruce throughout the levels: spikes wait to impale a careless fighter and lethal beams shoot across gaps. With all the hazards—not to mention Yamo and the Ninja—skilful timing is required to progress the levels.

The screens are colourful and have been well recreated with some good animation. As you'd expect for a remake, the sound is a huge improvement on the original. A great title soundtrack plays away as you look through the options and the spot effects are solid enough. Gameplay is great fun and feels just like the original. As with the original, there is a two-player mode (the second player controls Yamo), which makes for an interesting game, however, the remake has the option of two players against the computer with two Bruce Lees.

Apart from the main game, there are quite a few other modes and challenges to play through. You can even play the original version in all its 8-bit glory. Other modes are only unlocked by achieving certain accomplishments, so it's going to take some time to become the 'Ultimate Bruce Lee'.

For the true nostalgic trip, you can play the original...

You can even play Bruce Lee *Tron* style

SEWER SHARK

Developer Park Productions **Platform** PC & Mac **Download** v1.2 **Genre** Shoot-'em-up **Category** We Like It Retro

The original *Sewer Shark* got some fine reviews in the day, and was one of the Mega CD's finest efforts. Boasting FMV first perspective images, the game played out like an interactive movie.

In the future Earth suffers a nuclear blast. Humans have fled underground for cover, hiding in the sewers. However, Ratigators (mutant hybrid of rat and alligator) inhabit the sewers. Sewer Sharks have been hired to clean up the mutants. As a sewer shark, you play a rookie sewer shark code named 'Dog Meat'. Along with your co-pilot, you take control of an exterminator vehicle known as Hole Hawg.

The remake is an arcade shoot-'em-up, which scrolls vertically upwards, where you can move around in all directions, speeding up and slowing down. Along the way, metal barricades open to allow progress along the sewer. Be careful with these automatic barricades as crashing into them will decrease your ship's shield power. Various sewer pipes, do not hit.

While there are many ratigators patrolling the sewers, they are pretty easy to take out-one quick fire from your gun and they're history. Although anything that hits the ship causes damage. Clear each sewer sector of ratagators and exit the sector in the given time limit.

While the CPC version is colourful and clear...

The Speccy version suffers from colour clash

A unique feature of this remake (I certainly haven't come across this before) is that you can play any of the three 8-bit versions: Amstrad CPC, Commodore C64, or ZX Spectrum. While the three versions may look different, they play more or less the same as each other. Compared to the CPC and C64's colourful graphics, the Spectrum version suffers greatly from its monochrome display. It becomes hard on the eyes when controlling a blue ship along a blue sewer.

With 19 sectors you may think that you've got some game here, but to tell the truth, there's not much depth to it. Despite the graphics and playability being top notch, the game can get quite tedious. It is also a bit on the easy side and doesn't present much of a challenge...

ELECTRO FREDDY

Developer Musti **Platform** PC **Download** Release **Genre** Puzzle **Category** Retro Remakes

Electro Freddy is a remake of the game of the same name, developed by Softspot and published by Amsoft for the Amstrad CPC in 1985. You play Electro Freddy who has to stop the villain Uncle Claude of Sincrum Research by getting the product out of the warehouse to the shops.

The warehouse is a single screen with a conveyor belt running along the bottom. Product like Spectrums, Orics, MSXs, and C64s are scattered around the different warehouses. Using the arrow keys, you control Freddy and have to push the product onto the conveyor belt.

Uncle Claude will try and stop you and if he does then it's a hospital job as an ambulance rushes on screen and takes you away, losing a life in the process. However, you can push the product on top of him to knock him out, although he will reappear at the top of the screen.

Watch out for the falling Microsoft Windows packages, which will take you out. If you can move the entire product onto the conveyor belt then a key will appear for the next warehouse.

Controlling the character with the arrow keys can get quite fiddly and joystick compatibility would have been a huge plus for the game. As a consequence, the game is quite frustrating as a small mistake with the keys can lead to a loss of life.

While the graphics and sound aren't up to much, the game can be surprisingly addictive. However, once you have seen the first few levels (from a total of 25), it doesn't take long for tedium to set in.

Oh, dear, a little trip to the hospital

Watch out for the Windows package; it's evil

At last, a good use for a C64: whacking people over the head. I'm joking, of course

KICK OFF 2

Developer MikeDee **Platform** PC **Download** N/A **Genre** Sport **Category** Retro Remake

The *Kick Off* games pioneered many football features such as the vertically scrolling overhead viewpoint, mixing fast paced arcade action with realistic ball control: it didn't stick to the player's feet like other games. There was also the legendary aftertouch feature where the player could perform curling shots. So what can a PC remake possibly bring to the *KO2* fanatic? Well how about 3D graphics, improved ball physics, and improved crowd effects? Well, that's what was planned, but how well has the ideas been implemented?

The main menu offers you a Friendly Match, World Cup, Training, Options, and Quit. The options include difficulty (easy or normal), camera (KO style, horizontal normal/near, vertical normal/near), ball (classic, default, dots, white), ball control (free, sticky), match length, and full screen on/off. The friendly match is a good chance to practice the game and see how it fares against the original version. The World Cup tournament is the one that you will want to play in though,

You can view the action from the side, above, and more...

Japan scores against the incompetent goalkeeper

and if you can win the cup then a secret team will be unlocked (must be Scotland – Ed).

With some notable omissions in the remake, the game seems to falter before it's even started a match. When a match does start, it becomes clear that the graphics are a clear improvement on the original and the choice of viewpoints is an added bonus. The sound effects appear to be a marginal improvement with crowd chanting away and oohs ringing out when action happens.

However, one thing that you will notice is that the game is keyboard only. The arrow keys move the player around the pitch, while using them after you have just taken a shot will produce a renowned aftertouch finish. When attacking with the ball at your feet, pressing 'A' will perform a long pass, 'S' a medium pass, and 'D' will shoot at goal. While defending, pressing 'D' will produce a tackle. It's very fiddly to play the game with the keyboard, which hampers the gameplay drastically as the original was best played with a joystick.

KUNG FU II

Developer KNPMaster **Platform** PC **Download** N/A **Genre** Beat-'em-up **Category** Sequels That Weren't

Kung Fu 2 was entered into the 'Sequels That Weren't' category and is based on the 1984 NES *Kung Fu* game by Irem, which bears a passing resemblance of the arcade game *Kung Fu Master*. As 'Kung Fu Master' Thomas, it's your mission to negotiate the five-storey temple to rescue your girlfriend, Sylvia, from the clutches of the evil Mr X.

The game can be played with either keyboard or joystick, although joystick is recommended.

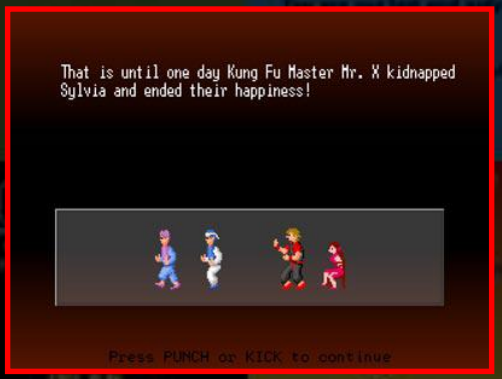
As you walk along the first corridor, all sorts of nasty henchmen and hazards get in your way, reducing your energy. Some will require you to defeat them while others can be avoided. Your energy is shown by the player's energy bar and if it reaches zero then a life is lost.

The enemy can be punched or kicked out of the way. Time the attacks carefully, though, as the henchmen can get you into a hold, which can be lethal as others can join in. A quick waggle of the joystick can knock them off, though.

As your progress through the levels the difficulty increases with new enemy and hazards. Things can get quite hairy at times when there are a lot of enemies on screen, and if you manage to dispatch them then there's a nasty guardian at the end of the level to deal with.

The gameplay is frustrating as ever and not just because it's difficult, but also because it involves as much luck as skill. The variety of enemies provides plenty of long-term gameplay if you get stuck into it.

The graphics are okay, and the sound effects are reasonable. It's certainly a challenge, but the repetitive and daunting action may be too much for some.



That old classic story: boy loses girl, boy beats up bad men, boy gets girl back...

Quite a bit of blood flies around. Just make sure that it's not yours

Category 1: Retro Remakes

The main category, as you would expect from the Retro Remakes competition, is Retro Remakes and sees the most games entered than any other category. The main category rule was to take a classic game and remake it with today's hardware, even improving on the game if possible by removing any flaws, bugs, etc.

Bandits At 3 O'clock
By Retrorookies

Remake of the Acorn Electron/ BBC game with elements adding from dogfight/ biplane style games on the Atari St and Amiga platforms.

Blocksmania DS
By Kukulkan

Puzznic was a popular puzzle game from Taito, and *Blocks Mania* brings that old classic up to date with new graphics and controls.

Deathchase
By James Kett

A remake of the game 1983 ZX Spectrum game "3D Deathchase".

Dingo
By Sokurah

Dingo is a labyrinth/maze game and you are `Big Ted` - a panda on a mission. The original arcade game was developed by A.C.G. in 1983.

Dizzy - The Lost Island
By Park Productions

Remake of the classic 8-bit adventure game from the Codemasters in 1987.

Electro Freddy
By Musti

Electro Freddy is a remake of the game of the same name, published for the Amstrad CPC.

The Empire Strikes Back
By Minionsoft

Based on the classic 1980s arcade machine, which was based on some film or another, which no one has ever heard of?

KickleC
By xCept

A remake of Irem America Corp's fiendish puzzle game *Kickle Cublicle*.

Kick Off 2
By Mike Dee

Remake of the classic Dino Dini football game from the 1990s.

Lords Of Conquest
By KaiserPC

A game of strategy/war for 1 to 4 players. A remake of the Electronic Arts game from 1987.

Mini-Saboteur
By FatSeagal

Mini-Saboteur is a remake of the 8-bit game *Saboteur*, originally published by Durell Software.

Monuments Of Mars
By Ed Britton

This is a remake of *Monuments of Mars Episode 1*, which was originally published by Apogee software

Parallax
By Endurion

This game is a freeware remake of *Parallax*, which was originally made by Sensible Software.

RetroBoxing 3D
By Gman

Remake of the original *Boxing* for the Atari 2600 by gman

Sabre Wulf
By Ervin

A remake of the classic 8-bit game by Ultimate Play the Game.

SEUCK
By KungPhoo

Shoot-'Em-Up Construction Kit for PC.

Sorcerer Lord
By KaiserPC

A one-player fantasy turn based war game. A remake of the PSS game of the same name from 1987.

Space Fury
By Sokurah

Shoot-`em-up remake of the original arcade game which was produced Gremlin in 1981.

Starquake DS
By ShaymanJohn

In order to save the Earth from a rogue planet, you must take control of BLOB (Bio-Logically Operated Being) and repair the planet's core.

Super Mario Kart
By Grindalf

Remake of the SNES classic Mario racing game.

Ultimate Bruce Lee
By Stu C, Smila and Ovine

Bruce Lee seeks to claim infinite wealth and the secret of immortality in this remake of the 8-bit classic platform beat-`em-up.

Zektor
By Sokurah

Shoot-`em-up remake of the arcade game which was produced Gremlin in 1983.

Category 2: Games That Weren't

Games can be planned or developed and then cancelled at any time. These are the games that weren't. With this category, coders were given the chance to develop a game that they wish was released, but wasn't.

Sigue Sigue Sputnik
By Lobo

In 1989 there was a hint of an *SSS* game coming to C64. It never happened and only one screen was released to public.

Category 3: Sequels That Weren't

Some games are great. There are also some which are just great to certain people. However great a game might be, it doesn't always guarantee a sequel. Well here was the chance for developers to release their very own sequel to that favourite game of theirs.

Hamurabi 2
By Brian Sauer

A city sim originally coded in 1969.

Kung Fu 2
By KNPMaster

Sequel to the NES game *Kung Fu*.

Raid On Fort Apocalypse
By bignobody

Guide your helicopter in a dangerous and daring raid on Fort Apocalypse.

The Kiwi's Tale
By Earok

Inspired by the original game *New Zealand Story*.

Pauline's Way
By Harold

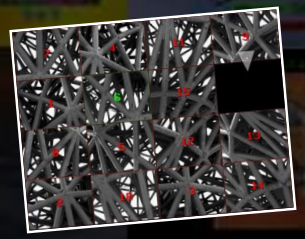
Pauline was the lady in the original *Donkey Kong* game.

Category 4: A Game For Helen

This is an interesting category and perhaps the most challenging one.

Aimed at bringing home games to those who cannot play the typical arcade type genre due to disability.

A Sliding Puzzle For Helen
By TCK



A sliding puzzle game for the Games For Helen category.

Battlezone
By Genki

You control a futuristic tank defending the earth against an alien fleet.

Carnival 1980
By Scott McKay

Carnival is a shooting gallery game for the Games For Helen Category

Letter Blaster
By Lindsay Grace

Remake of the letter blaster game from the Apple 2 many, many years ago.

Ropor
By Ichigo Jam

Help Robot to collect treasure, then using the warp that appears.

The Factory
By Hockings

Do you have what it takes to run a complex production line?

21st Century Frog
By Endurion
Sit there catching flies.

Whack A Monty Mole
By Stu C, Smila and Ovine
Whack A Mole, Monty style.

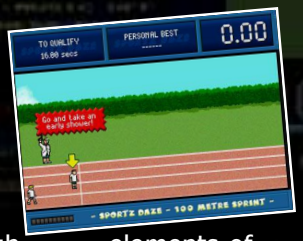
Category 5: Mash Up

For this category, coders were asked to merge different games together to form one. Like *Aliens vs Predator*. Oh, wait, that's been done, but you get the idea. A hybrid of two, or more games.

Blast Passage
By Markus Persson

Bomberman vs *Gauntlet*.

Snakoban Dash
By Ichigo Jam



Sokoban vs *Snake* vs the ZX Spectrum.

Sports Daze
By RichJ

Sports game with elements of *Skool Daze*, *Hypersports*, and *Decathlon*.

Tetroid
By Caleb Eberhardt and Ian O'Dea

Tetris and *Metroid* in the same game?

The Eggyard
by Yxxa Zu and Monochrome

Custer's Revenge vs *Dizzy*.

Category 6: We Like It Retro

Yup, we certainly like it retro. But wait, this category is all about developing a PC game that could pass off as a Spectrum, C64, or Amstrad CPC game. This meant limiting the game to the same spec as those machines.

As Time Goes By
By Lobo

Casablanca, the game, comic book style.

CPC
By Carnivac

Amstrad CPC run and gun action.

Devil Ronin
By The Codex

An original game in C64 style.

Lightmare
By Kevin Oke

A retro style vampire game.

Retroman
By Joachim Despland

Rid the planet of the evil space robots.

Revenge Of The Punched Tape
By VladiKuz

Retro style humorous gaming.

Sewer Shark
By Park Productions

Remake of the Mega CD FMV game, in three separate retro styles.

Spare A Thought For The Little Guy
By Saul Cross

Collect the souls and escape from hell, C64 style.

Staroid
by Ichigo Jam

Asteroid based C64 styled platform action.

Duffman loads up this issue's pile of previews and work in progress games and is impressed—judging by the games in development, the future of homebrew gaming is looking very good indeed

FACTORY DAZE

Developer Bob Smith **Platform** ZX Spectrum **Download** Work In Progress **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** Puzzle

At first glance *Factory Daze* looks very similar to LucasArt's *Night Shift*—which also features a similar plot—but as you play the game, it soon becomes apparent that this is different enough to stand on its own.

The purpose of the game is to produce a certain quota of toys required by the bosses. For example, level one might require four toys out of a batch of five kits, with two different toys needed.

Play can be done with keyboard or joystick, which are both customisable to the player's preferences. A password system is also in place, ready for the final game's release.

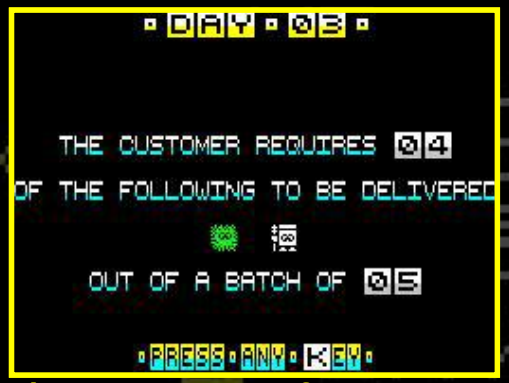
The toy kit machine begins at the top, where a toy kit starts moving down a conveyer belt. It's down to you to correctly apply the relevant toy making machinery to the kit. This is achieved by moving the keys/joystick right and left to make the corresponding toy image appear. To make things easier, the toys are colour co-ordinated, and the toy making machinery colour matches the toy kits.

The rest of the factory process is more or less done for you as the toys are made without any intervention. The toy parts travel down onto the second conveyor and are assembled more, before being completed on the final conveyor belt. They are then shipped in to the back of the delivery van.

Achieve the production quota and you go to level two, but miss the quota and it's a first warning from your boss. It sounds easy doesn't it, and it is for the first few levels anyway. Things start getting hectic when another toy machine is given to your control—you can tell this has happened because the toy icons appear on the front of it and the lights on it flash away. This means that you have to move up and down between the two machines adjusting them to the correct toy. And if there are several different toys to produce—needing four machines to control—then things can really get hairy. However, in your advantage is that the number of batches goes up as well, so there's more room for errors during the toy production.

The graphics are all in place and look good. The title screen is particularly impressive: its menu and credits all below an image of the factory's exterior. The factory sign 'Daze' even lights up a letter at a time—just like a sleazy old factory. There wasn't any music or sound in this preview version, but looking at the credits Lee Du-Caine has been credited with music and sound effects, so expect some decent stuff there. So the game looks promising, and definitely one to look out for when it is released as a free download.

Looking good so far. Just sit back and watch as the conveyor belt whizzes them into the truck



The customer wants four toys—comprising of green and white—produced. No probs

With two toys right and one wrong so far, it's now all down to the last two coming into the truck...

DX RICK 2

Developer Rox271 **Platform** PC **Download** v0.80 **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** Platform

Currently version 0.8, and very playable, *DXRick2* is a DirectX 9 remake of the 1990 classic *Rick Dangerous 2* by Core Design. The original was given rave reviews throughout many computer magazines at the time with many ratings in the nineties. *DXRick2* is based on the design of the Atari ST version, but with some of the soundtrack from the Amiga version.

The plot involves Rick fighting off hordes of aliens. Rick's nemesis, the Fat Man, has enlisted a fleet of alien spaceships to invade Earth. As the ships hover over London, Rick makes a run towards one that lands in Hyde Park. It's time to settle this once and for all...

Although not 100% complete, the game is very playable – all levels are there and accounted for. However, you will need to install the latest version of Microsoft DirectX driver – DX9c or better.

As with the original, humour plays a part in the game. First there's Rick himself, who wears a Flash Gordon style outfit, adversaries include clockwork penguins, Alpine goat herders, B-movie style robots and so on.

The graphics are more colourful and varied, with a large number of wonderfully animated sprites. The sound has also been given a boost, although the infamous difficulty is still present, but that's what made it what it was.

GAME OF THE DEAD

Developer Ood **Platform** PC **Download** v0.2 **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** Shoot-'em-up

Zombies Ate My Neighbours (or ZAMN for short) was originally released on the Mega Drive as just *Zombies*. Somehow the powers that be must have thought that zombies eating neighbours wasn't a very nice title or something.

ZAMN is a quirky parody of all the great horror and sci-fi films of the past with *Gauntlet*/*Smash TV* style gameplay. You trek through the various areas (people's gardens, playing fields, spooky castles..) rescuing normal everyday folk (neighbours even) while blasting, beating, freezing and generally destroying zombies, mummies, chainsaw maniacs, and killer babies.

There are loads of different enemies, and a similarly large number of weapons with which to waste them with: water pistols, cutlery, plates, grass strimmer, rocket launcher... Each weapon has a different effect on each enemy, and ammunition is limited, so it's not just a question of mindless blasting either.

Odd is currently working on a remake titled *Game of the Dead* and has released a playable Alpha 0.2 demo. The graphics look great and the game really suits the 3D landscapes. We can't really determine how the game will eventually play, so what will the game feature? How about real time lighting, 3D zombies, extra weapons, RTS elements, fogging, online multiplayer? Sounds great...

PIER SOLAR

Developer Water Melon Development **Platform** Sega Mega Drive/Genesis **Download** Preview demo **Video clip** YouTube / Trailer **Genre** RPG

Pier solar and the Great Architects, to give it it's full title, is a new Mega Drive/Genesis game from Water Melon Development. The RPG has been in development for a good few years now and was set for a Christmas 2008 release. However, following a setback, the game has been put back to Spring 2009.

The story follows the exploits of a trio of young friends-Hoston, Alina, and Edessot-in the peaceful town of Reja. Unfortunately, Hoston's father is very ill and the only cure is a rare herb found only in a dangerous cave that houses all manners of monsters. Although successful in finding the herb, Hoston learns of a greater evil which threatens their peaceful lives...

The preview contains the first mission and despite its problems looks very promising. The graphics are great (colourful, well defined with some nice cut scenes), sound is good and the gameplay is classic RPG style.

The game will come in a 64mb cartridge available from the official website. The package will include the game cartridge, a CD-ROM, an authentic retail case, an instruction manual, and a poster. The CD-ROM will enable the game to be played with the Mega CD add-on with enhanced soundtrack and effects.

Hopefully, the game will be ready by the time we get around to completing issue two and if it is then expect to see a full review then. I'm sure the extra wait will be worth it. In the meantime check out the official website, the demo, and the unofficial fan site.

MOUNTAIN PANIC

Developer Dave Footit **Publisher** Retrosoftware **Platform** BBC Micro **Download** Demo **Video Clip** YouTube **Genre** Platform

A new BBC Micro game in development by coder Dave Footitt and artist Roger Coe and Chris Hogg. *Mountain Panic* is an original flip screen adventure based on *Mountains of Madness* novella by H.P. Lovecraft. The demo is quite an early version, but the completed game will feature Mode 2 colour graphics, ability to climb a thrown rope, use items, enemies (including penguins), and more...

BLURP

Developer Rich Talbot-Watkins
Publisher Retrosoftware
Platform BBC Micro
Video Clip YouTube **Genre** Platform

Blurp, coded by Rich Talbot-Watkins, is a scrolling platform game in development for the BBC Micro. I can't help but be re-minded of the Amstrad CPC Plus game *Fluff* when I look at *Blurp's* screenshots. Little is known of the game, but when it's finally released, we can expect to see some cute multi-directional scrolling, action.

JILL OF THE JUNGLE

Duncan Rule finds girl power and giant ants at the C:\ prompt

The year was 1992, and a certain Italian plumber was at the height of his powers. The platform genre had officially exploded, and the resulting games were two-a-penny. Legions of console gamers were spoilt for choice as they picked out the next ledge-jumper worthy of dropping their hard-earned cash on. PC gamers certainly weren't going to be left out however, and the early 1990s saw a number of developers and publishers trying their hand at creating a *Super Mario* rival for the mighty 80386.

Epic Megagames (now Epic Games of *Unreal* fame) decided to try and out-do id's *Commander Keen* and Apogee's *Duke Nukum* (as he was known circa 92) with their own platform-hopping hero. The result was *Jill of the Jungle*; a vine-swinging, tree-jumping, knife-throwing femme fatale. That's right Lara, Jill beat you to the punch by four years, and her games were a hell of a lot more fun than yours to boot.

Jill was distributed using the then-reigning shareware business model, and came in three separate parts: *Jill of the Jungle*, *Jill Goes Underground*, and *Jill Saves the Prince* (that's right, the prince is the one getting saved; could this be one of the earliest examples of feminism in gaming?). The first part could be freely acquired and distributed, whilst parts two and three were only available when purchased directly from Epic.

Each of *Jill*'s three chapters are structured differently. Chapter one consists of a side-scrolling overworld filled with entrances to the various main levels, which can only be accessed after completing the preceding level. Chapter two goes for a more traditional, direct level-by-level progression, whilst chapter three presents gamers with a top-down, map-style overworld. The core game however remains the same throughout all three chapters, and consists primarily of the standard

That's right Lara, Jill beat you to the punch by four years, and her games were a hell of a lot more fun than yours to

JILL OF THE JUNGLE

Developer / Publisher Epic Megagames **Released** 1992 **Platforms** PC DOS **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** Platform

There's Jill in the, er, Jungle...

Jill out of the Jungle...

Jill back in the Jungle...

run-and-jump gameplay we all know and love. Rather than simply charging from one end of the scrolling world to the other, though, *Jill*'s levels are constructed in a rather more non-linear fashion, with various areas to explore in all directions (including frequent underground sections). This design means the game can include some nice hidden areas and odd touches that you may miss the first time round. *Jill of the Jungle* also makes use of a number of quite original ideas and game mechanics to separate itself from the average platformer of the day.

One of the most interesting of these is the weapon system the game uses. Jill, unlike Mario and many others, cannot harm enemies simply by jumping on them. Neither can she blast away with lasers and ray-guns. Instead, Jill is able to collect knives and throwing stars throughout the game, which behave in different ways. The knife, when thrown, will shoot out in a straight line from Jill, decimating whatever is in its way before returning to her, boomerang-style. This presents an interesting mechanic, as Jill's movement can be used to divert the course of a returning knife, causing it to kill extra enemies on its way back. It's also possible to lose the knife entirely, as it will give up if it gets stuck, and must be picked up again manually. The throwing stars, acquired later, are somewhat easier to use, as they bounce around killing whatever they find.

In her third adventure, Jill went out to save the Prince...

At various times, *Jill* also requires you to activate power-ups which will turn you into an animal (such as a flame-bird or a frog), in order to advance in a specific area. These animals have additional powers (such as the bird's ability to shoot fireballs) that will enable you to traverse an area that Jill would be unable to in human form. *Jill of the Jungle* is rife with puzzles, and most levels will require you to use your brain a few times to figure out how to progress. While these puzzles aren't exactly the most challenging ever conceived, they provide a welcome change from the mindless left-to-right jumping of most platformers, and add an interesting dimension to the levels.

The graphics here are bright, colourful and very memorable, and each episode makes use of a slightly different palette to give it its own feel. If you're feeling really old-school, the standard VGA mode can be switched to EGA on start-up to provide some archaic 16-colour fun. The enemies on offer range from animal-based foes such as frogs, giant ants and crocodiles early on, to strange demons and monsters later in the game. *Jill* is also noteworthy for its fantastic sound effects, which are so much fun that Epic decided to include a feature that lets you mash your keyboard to play any of the game's various noises.

Jill was kicked squarely into the infinite abyss of lost DOS games, never to be heard from again

Two years later, Epic decided to jump on the 90s-tastic "anthropomorphic animals with 'tude" bandwagon and released (the admittedly brilliant) *Jazz Jackrabbit*. *Jill* was kicked squarely into the infinite abyss of lost DOS games, never to be heard from again. Those of you who played *Jill of the Jungle* at the time will likely remember her adventures with fondness, and if you want to try a platformer that's a bit different, or you're just bored of playing *Commander Keen*, it's a game you'll definitely want to track down.

(Note: Apparently *Jill of the Jungle* can still be purchased via Epic Classics, although my recent e-mail to them went unanswered. Does the company even still exist? Answers on a postcard please.)

GamesMaster

Series One, Episode One

GamesMaster helped bring video games to the masses and gave birth to the TV game show format. Neil Reive goes back in time to January 1992 to relive the historic premiere episode all over again...

On Channel 4 at precisely 6:30pm on Tuesday 7th January 1992, something amazing happened for gamers across the UK; a phenomenal piece of gaming history that influenced others to follow in its path. This was the premiere broadcast of a new video games show entitled *GamesMaster*. Finally gamers had an entire television show dedicated to their hobby, their machines, and their games. Sure, it was short and sweet, but it was ours. Many imitations came and went over the years, but GamesMaster was undoubtedly the first, not to mention the best, of its kind. From its "virtual world" opening credit sequence, the cheeky Scottish presenter, the production design and the guest reviewers, *GamesMaster* offered something different, something unique, and a legacy that lasts to this day—albeit in a slightly diluted form—with the *GamesMaster* magazine.

The Church: the main set for series one

Dominic Diamond: the host, the main man, a cheeky chappy

Sir Patrick Moore: the almighty GamesMaster

Julian Rignall (left): the first games journalist to co-commentate

The show's format was principally three games playing challenges (including a celebrity challenge) which were punctuated by reviews, news, features, and the Consoletation Zone (containing hints, tips and cheats). As you can imagine, this was a lot to fit into 22 minutes of airtime, but the guys behind the show did a fantastic job. So, let's go back in time to January 1992 and relive the historic premiere episode all over again...

The show opens in the mistiness of a church interior as the crowd go wild. Video arcade games line the far end of the wall and the crowd line up in the pews. A fresh faced Dominik Diamond steps down from the organ, heads towards the centre of the main stage and introduces the show: "Welcome to *GamesMaster*. Television's first ever videogames magazine show. Dedicated especially to people out there who find *Pictionary* pointless and *Kerplunk* a waste of marbles." After he explains the show's premise, he then introduces us to The GamesMaster himself: Sir Patrick Moore, who appears in pre-recorded inserts and sets the games challenges.

Challenge one is *Super Mario Bros. 3* and the first challenger, Daniel Blake from Edgewell, has the task of collecting 50 coins in two minutes on level one. Dominik enters the commentator's box to join the show's first co-commentator "world famous computing celebrity" Julian Rignall (of *Mean Machines* and *Computer and Video Games* magazine).

The challenge begins, and after a minor stumble (he misses the secret tunnel at the first attempt) Daniel is

"Welcome to *GamesMaster*. Television's first ever videogames magazine show. Dedicated especially to people out there who find *Pictionary* pointless and *Kerplunk* a waste of marbles." - Dominic Diamond

"If you take that back to Edgewell with you, put it in your hand, and walk around proud and erect through the high street." - Dominic Diamond

The first reviewing team includes David Wilson from Zero magazine...

...and Radion Automatic from Computer and Video Games magazine

successful, walking off with the first ever *GamesMaster* Golden Joystick award. Dominik offers his congratulations: "If you take that back to Edgewell with you, put it in your hand and walk around proud and erect through the high street."

Just like the magazines at the time, *GamesMaster* included reviews of forthcoming titles. In an attempt to give the show some credibility with the viewers and gaming industry alike, the producers hired the cream of games journalists from the main publishing companies such as EMAP and Future Publishing. This gave the show the opportunity to use the collective views from journalists who worked on magazines including *Mean Machines*, *Computer and Video Games (C&VG)*, *ACE*, *Sega Power*, and *Amiga Format*.

For episode one, the three reviewers look at movie-to-game adaptations. Up first is *The Terminator* on the Sega Mega Drive. David Wilson (Zero magazine) describes it as a "...good game. It's very playable. Nice big sprites. Lots of exciting explosions and gung-ho action." Tim Oberman (who?) points out the "...digitised screen shots, which are very impressive." Radion (*C&VG*) tells us "...for once, it's a Mega Drive game that packs a real challenge." The final verdict is a decent 87%.

Dominik introduces the next game as a "macabre romp 'round your Nintendo with *The Addams Family*." "For youngsters, it's a good game," explains David Wilson, "...and it certainly would give you value for money in terms of playability because it's very addictive. But it doesn't really offer much original or new." An average final verdict of 63% is given.

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis for the PC rounds off the reviews. "A much more sophisticated game," states David, "...superior graphics, and the depth of the story and puzzling is at a much higher level." Radion tells us that "it's got all the makings of a Lucasfilm game. If you look at it, the attention to detail; the quality of the graphics... [it's] ...one of the best PC adventure games." A fine final verdict of 93% is awarded.

Following the reviews is a quick feature on Gameboy customisation. One guy has put skateboard grips onto his Gameboy to make it more comfortable and to stop his hands sweating so much. While a woman tells us that "a Gameboy comes into this world naked and it's just begging to be designed. It's crying out to be scribbled on, drawn on,

The first ever GamesMaster Golden Joystick is won by Daniel Blake

Dominic and second co-commentator Tom Watson from Renegade

Help with *Sonic the Hedgehog* in the consoletation zone

Simon Reynolds scores against John Fashanu in the celebrity challenge...

John has a chance to reply with a quick equalizer, but manages to smack the ball onto the bar from two yards, much to the amusement to all present

John Fashanu smacks the ball onto the bar from two yards in the celebrity challenge

Tim Boone, editor of C&VG, joins Dominic in the pulpit to co-commentate on the final game

smashed up and designed all over."

Celebrity Challenge time, and The GamesMaster tells us that the game he has chosen is *Manchester United Europe* (also known as *European Club Soccer* to console players). The game will be played over two 90-second halves, with Simon Reynolds from Bishop Stortford taking on Wimbledon and England striker John Fashanu. Joining Dominik in his "pulpit dugout" to co-commentate this time is Renegade Software's Tom Watson. The game begins well enough—despite some dodgy tackling—and both players hit the post within seconds of each other. However, the first halve ends goalless. Simon goes into the lead in the second half, after a blunder from John's goalkeeper. John has a chance to reply with a quick equalizer, but manages to smack the ball onto the bar from two yards, much to the amusement to all present. Simon takes advantage of John's lapse in concentration and scores a long-range effort to help him win the game 2-0, taking home with him a GamesMaster Golden Joystick.

Oh dear, it's now time for the Consoletation section, where members of the public ask GamesMaster for tips and cheats on their favourite video games. One guy is having trouble finding the "secret world" in act three of *Sonic the Hedgehog*. He "can't find it anywhere." GamesMaster shows him how to spin through a wall and into a room with bonus rings. Another guy is having trouble with spells in Elvira, and the last Consoletation involves Simon's Quest, and a cliff.

Tony Wright rounds off the show with a winning performance on *Mad Dog McGree*...

...winning a golden joystick in the process

For the final challenge, The GamesMaster chooses the arcade light gun game *Mad Dog McCree*. The challenger, Tony Wright from Wales, must rid the town of outlaws and free the imprisoned sheriff who is held hostage in his own jail. "So get your pistol hammer cocked, and let's see those barrels blazing." Co-commentating with Dominik this time is Tim Boone (editor of *Computer and Video Games* magazine). The shooting is top drawer, and Tony takes out on-comers left, right, and centre. He frees the sheriff and wins himself the coveted *GamesMaster* Golden Joystick.

As Dominik closes the episode, he dons his smoking jacket, tells the audience that he'll "see [them] again in seven days," before disappearing into the haze of the church with the monk following closely behind. The camera pulls away, then the closing theme kicks in, as the computer-style closing credits begin to roll.

The first episode is brought to an end as Dominik bids farewell, until next time....

That'll be the end of the episode then?

THE GREAT ZENOBI SOFTWARE INTERVIEW WITH A BALROG

With so many names and guises, it was virtually an impossible task to track down the man behind one of the Spectrum's great publishers, but Gnome managed it. He talks to John Wilson—the man behind Zenobi—about his past, present, and future

***Behind Closed Doors*, eh? Sounds like a great advertisement for this interview**

Zenobi Software, the Rochdale Balrog, the Cat and the Cockroach were responsible for developing and/or publishing over two hundred excellent—nay, classic—ZX Spectrum text-adventures (that were eventually ported to most other home micros) and quite a few Atari ST ones too. What's more, John Wilson (a.k.a. the Balrog) the man behind it all, a Speccy developer that supported the machine all the way into the 90s and a key figure in the adventure scene, is here to enlighten you and me on how things happened and what the future holds. Read on, then hop over to the lovely official Zenobi website (zenobi.co.uk), grab a DVD with its rich retro offerings, ask for a freebie, frolic in the forum and remember just how great retro 8-bit interactive fiction was.

Gnome: Tell us a bit about yourself, oh Balrog. Some info on the cat might be nice too.
Balrog: I was born in Edinburgh (Scotland) in 1947 and moved to South Wales (Cwmbran) at the age of 12. Lived there for a few years and then moved to North Wales (Flint) before enlisting in the Royal Air Force in 1964. Served in various places... as far apart as Valley (Anglesey) and Seletar (Singapore) before settling down in Rochdale in 1970 where I still live to this day. As for the 'cat' that is simply one of my many 'alter-egos'... now, that is a 'first' for you and your readers, as I have never admitted to that before. 'Cat' is a good one, unlike 'Cockroach' who is an evil, mischievous little sod.

G: Why—and more importantly, how—did you start Zenobi? Were you all alone in this, erm, adventure of sorts?
B: Had been unemployed for a number of years and during a 'careers interview' I blurted out "to run a software house" in answer to one of their questions. Being me, I decided to stick with that choice and Zenobi Software was formed in 1984/85. Like everything in my life, since I met her, my Ann was with me in this enterprise. Without her help I would never have made the success of Zenobi Software that it was... if it ever was a 'success'.

G: And the focus on text-adventures on the ZX Spectrum? How did you decide on that?
B: Because they were what I was into at the time. I had been given a ZX81 by a mate and then upgraded to a ZX Spectrum... the only things that seemed reasonable to play on these machines were 'text adventures' (the arcade games did not appeal) so those became my passion.

G: Did you have any game developing experience before starting up Zenobi? Any ties to the industry?
B: None whatsoever. I was working as a Radio/TV Technician just prior to starting Zenobi and before that I had been a Quantity Surveyor for a number of years. The urge to produce an adventure-game came simply from my own experiences and the games I had played through at that time. I liked what I had played and thought I could produce something similar (if not better...).

G: Weren't you afraid of actually competing against bigger software houses?
B: I am never afraid of a challenge and to be quite honest I never envisaged myself as being in 'competition' with anybody. The whole idea of the project was simply to get *my* games out to the general public. Things just got out of hand a touch and grew far bigger than I ever imagined.

'Cat' is a good one, unlike 'Cockroach' who is an evil, mischievous little sod

THE GREAT ZENOBI SOFTWARE INTERVIEW WITH A BALROG

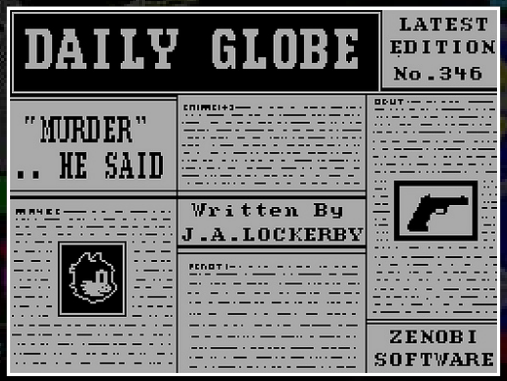
G: Besides designing, playtesting and publishing Zenobi adventures, did you actually allow yourself to enjoy any of your competitors' offerings? Any non-Zenobi favourites you are still fond of?
B: Never actually played any of my direct competitor's games apart from those by Compass Software (I always liked their stuff) and Essential Myth (liked them so much I bought the rights to their *Jekyll & Hyde*). However I was a great fan of the more 'professional' set-ups such as Interceptor Micros. AdventureSoft, CRL, and Delta 4. Games such as *The Warlord*, *Heroes of Karn,* and *Robin Of Sherwood* still have fond memories for me.

Two other software houses whose games I really enjoyed were Mysterious Adventures (Brian Howarth) and Smart Egg Software (even though they tried to rip me off with a 'deal' for *Seeker of Gold* and *Bulbo*).

Some Favourite Games Of All Time (in no particular order) include: *Rebel Planet*, *Jewels of Babylon*, *Lords of Midnight*, *Doomdark's Revenge*, *Sorcerer of Claymorgue Castle*, *Rigel's Revenge*, *The Ket Trilogy*, *Shadowfire*, *Heavy On The Magick*, and *Tir Na Nog*.

G: You've created a fair amount of admittedly brilliant, tough, inspired and generally hilarious adventures. Which ones are you favourites? Was there a certain way your games were designed? I mean, really, where did all this inspiration come from?
B: Of them all, the original *Behind Closed Doors* has to be my favourite, if only for the fact that it was written, tested and finalised in less than 24 hours. However *all* of them are my 'children' and just as in real-life I never choose favourites.

G: How did you come up with those intricate puzzles?
B: Pinched all the ideas from 'real-life' incidents. All it takes is a little imagination and you can convert anything into an 'adventure-situation'. Alas, I am very lucky to have the kind of mind that can come up with 'ideas' without too much thinking... I used to dream them up as I typed them sometimes.



G: What about them weird names, settings, loading screens and stories?
B: They are all part of the twisted mind that I have been blessed with... that and the ability to 'bend' things to suit. Give me a 'topic' and I can generally sit down and just type out a story (complete with characters, plot, descriptions, etc) and do all this as I go along. Much in the same way that I am typing out this interview. No preparation, just 'flying by the seat of my pants' as my old Dad would say.

G: Now, as Zenobi published quite a few games from a variety of authors/designers, could you give us some insight as to how this bit actually worked?
B: Simple... I was unable to produce enough games (personally) to meet the demand, so decided to use the services of other authors to meet the quota. I spread the word I was on the lookout for new games and they just came flooding in.
G: In retrospect, which would you say were the finest moments in/of Zenobi?
B: Getting the first game-review published (*The Boggit* in PCW), being awarded 'Mega-game' status in Your Sinclair and being voted 'Best Software House' (the *first* time).

G: Why stop after the Atari ST games?
B: It was no longer a viable proposition to produce *new* games for either the ZX Spectrum or the Atari ST. Sales were no longer high enough to warrant the financial outlay and I felt that it was stupid to keep squandering my *own* cash on a losing cause.

G: Any other platforms you developed for?
B: Not really, though we did produce 'emulations' of *all* the original ZX Spectrum titles to suit the Commodore Amiga, Mac, PC, Sam Coupe, and QL. Not to mention every form there was of the ZX Spectrum... i.e. Plus D, +3, Tape etc.

G: Oh, and do you still play games? Any thoughts on their current state?
B: Nope... my real passion has always been music and these days my spare time is spent listening to that. My CD collection numbers in the 'tens' of thousands... you can believe that or not!

I am very lucky to have the kind of mind that can come up with 'ideas' without too much thinking

THE GREAT ZENOBI SOFTWARE INTERVIEW WITH A BALROG

G: Considering there is a strong Spectrum retro scene, a very lively interactive fiction scene and an obvious revival of the adventure genre, well, what does the future hold? More games? A book per-chance?
B: None of the above. I still write the odd short-tale, but they are either just for my own amusement (and end up in the desk-drawer) or else they get put on the website where they bore everybody to death. Though I have promised myself that one day I will bring the Korat tale to its eventual conclusion... if only for my own peace of mind.

G: You've been kind enough to provide the gaming masses with the excellent Zenobi DVD directly from your website (zenobi.co.uk). Care to explain what it's all about?
B: Very simple that, I needed to continue to earn some money and that seemed the quickest and best way to do it. It also meant that the entire Zenobi collection would be available in one fell swoop for whosoever wanted to purchase a copy. I quite liked the thought of putting all of the past 25 years in one safe place as well.

G: You wouldn't have any original tapes for sale, would you?
B: This is a question I have been asked a lot in the past few years, but sadly the only ones I have left are the original 'master' copies and I am very reluctant to part with them. To be honest I don't think there is a single 'blank' cassette-tape in the place these days. So sadly, the answer has to be... No!

G: Any advice for aspiring adventure writers? For indie developers per chance?
B: For the 'writers', simply this: make it believable, make it interesting and allow the 'player' to feel part of the game. That way you draw them in and with a touch of inspired writing perhaps you can hold them long enough for them to *want* to complete the adventure.

For the 'indie developers', work hard, cut your costs, and provide the customers with a product they will want to buy again and again. But most of all, remember

that no matter what you may think, the 'customer' is always right and that they usually vote/show their approval with their gold.

G: How do you feel about the fact that people still care that much about those lovely (mostly) 8-bit games you provided them with?
B: It makes an old man very happy (and gives him a nice warm 'glow' at times...) to see that so many people still hold Zenobi adventures in such high regard. It was just a pity that my abrasive (and sometimes very 'blunt') approach to life caused so much ill feeling amongst my contemporaries. However, it was always the 'customers' that mattered and it is them that hold Zenobi dear to their hearts.

G: Finally, you do still feel the Zenobi love, don't you? Mind you, feel free to add anything else you think would be vaguely appropriate and/or titillating.
B: The 'Zenobi Love'... just what the f*ck is that? Zenobi Software was a part of my life, is still a part of my life and always will be a part of my life—it has nothing to do with 'love' it was (and still is) the 'driving-force' behind my existence.

It was a dark rainy night and Balrog was slumped over a plate of mince & tatties when there was a gentle 'tap' on the kitchen door. "Bloody visitors... and at this time of night as well!" growled Balrog as he flicked the errant pea(s) back on to his plate and shuffled off in the direction of the knock. "John Wilson?" enquired the chubby-faced gent stood in the pouring rain. "Come in Tam..." grinned the Balrog and ushered the gent, and his companion, into the warmth of the kitchen. "How do you know me?" asked the gent. "Saw your picture in PCW when you were awarded the prize for completing *The Ket Trilogy* smiled Balrog, flicking on the switch for the kettle and reaching under the worktop for some cups. "Tea or coffee and how many sugars?"

So it was that 'Tartan Tam' encountered the Balrog for the first time... a true story!

Note: this interview was originally published over at Gnome's Lair, and is presented here in its edited form and with the approval of John Wilson, who was kind enough to answer quite a few more questions exclusively for the readers of *Retroaction*.

Zenobi Software was a part of my life, is still a part of my life and always will be a part of my life...

BATTLE LANE VOL. 5

Guns, rockets, bikes, jeeps, trucks, bang, bang, bang, crash... Game over. Neil Reive drives up this mysterious Battle Lane, gnashes his teeth in frustration at the difficulty curve, but continues to play away and discovers that this forgotten arcade game is actually quite good

Arcade gaming used to be a staple diet for most gamers across the land, with such great innovative games like *Space Harrier*, *OutRun*, *Operation Wolf*, and many more showing the way forward for computer and console machines. However, by the mid 1990s, consoles and PCs had improved significantly and arcade games had all but disappeared from the streets. With huge leaps in technology it became less of a need to visit the arcade for the latest and greatest looking game. "Why visit an old dusty arcade when you can play the arcade in your home?" seemed to be the feeling amongst many gamers. Multiplayer and online aspects that most games came with added to the arcade's downfall. Arcades soon became the forgotten gaming pastime, and was ignored by gamers and developers alike. Now only the hardcore establishments host the odd arcade cabinet now and then.

The actual license of *Battle Lane* belonged to Taito, who then licensed it to Tecmo, who further licensed the title to Romstar. This seemingly pass-the-parcel process of distributing the game could be viewed as the companies feeling that the game was poor compared to other games at the time. So what we have here is an unappreciated little game that was ignored by a lot of journalists, gamers and, well, everyone else.

What we have here is an unappreciated little game that was ignored by a lot of journalists, gamers and, well, everyone else

Battle Lane Vol. 5, to give its full title, is a vertical scrolling shoot-'em-up with a hint of *Commando*. The quick intro sees a convoy of enemy army bikes, jeeps, and trucks, driving up the, so called, battle lane, with what looks like nuclear weapons onboard a large trailer. Once they've disappeared off screen, your hero, on his little bike, appears ready to chase after them, reach the end of level and destroy the enemy defences.

Driving up the narrow dusty lane, you soon encounter the first of the enemy soldier bikers. But these aren't normal bikes; they're sidecar bikes and a soldier in the passenger side fires pot shots at you. Soon other enemy vehicles are in sight: bikes, armoured jeeps, trucks who shoot machine gun fire, grenades, and rockets at you. The eight way directional controls ensure that you can go backwards and forwards as well as dodge from side to side. This is essential when you are dodging bullets, vehicles or bridges. In addition, button one fires unlimited bullets and button two fires off a rocket. Rockets can be picked up along the way and are limited.

Battle Lane is very fast and packed with action. There's nowhere to hide for a breather, you've just got to plough straight up the road and hope your driving and shooting skills are up to scratch. You have to carefully plan your progress. Will you shoot everything in sight, just dodge everything, or a fine balance of both tactics? Killing off the enemy isn't the end of the danger, though, as you've still go to concentrate avoiding their vehicle exploding or bike veering off course in front of you.

With three lives, no energy bar, and no continues available, this is one tough game to crack. Careful trial and error gameplay is needed to ensure progression. The screen is smooth and constantly scrolls upwards, keeping you on your toes. It can be frustratingly difficult at times, and with the first bonus given out after racking up 20,000 points, and every 50,000 points thereafter, the programmers haven't given any leeway at all.

The graphics are colourful and well defined, with some *Commando* style sprites used. Sound is well catered for with a background soundtrack plays throughout the game. Spot effects likes explosions, gunfire, and crashes are done to an adequate level. A two player is available, albeit consisting of players taking turns one after the other, but it would have been nice to have co-operative gameplay.

At first glance, *Battle Lane Vol. 5* doesn't look like much—just a *Commando* clone with bikes—but play it for a few minutes and you will see that it is different enough to stand on its own. There is an addictively—albeit frustrating—game hidden under these familiar visuals. With a bit of practice you'll soon be racing up Battle Lane causing all sorts of havoc and enjoying one the arcade's lost games.

Skilful driving as well as good shooting skills are needed in this game

If you're not up to fighting, you can try to dodge around the outside of the vehicles

Okay, I lied; you do get a breather for a second when you drive over a bridge

The battle lane defences, and you'll be seeing a lot of this; Game Over, that is...

At first glance, *Battle Lane Vol. 5* doesn't look like much—just a *Commando* clone with bikes—but play it for a few minutes and you will see that it is different enough to stand on its own

VOYAGE TO THE BOWELS OF THE BACK CATALOGUE

The pre-release hype: Oh, no, it's "coming soon" advertisement... and the wall chart given away with the game. Hurrah!

SI BUSCAS LO MEJOR, ERBE SOFTWARE LO TIENE
EL PROGRAMA OFICIAL DEL CAMPEONATO DE MEXICO 86
WORLD CUP 1986
MEXICO86
SIGUE LOS MUNDIALES DE FUTBOL CON TU ORDENADOR
TOTALMENTE EN CASTELLANO
ADEMAS DE UN FABULOSO PROGRAMA DE FUTBOL, CONTIENE:
• UN ALBUM/POSTER EN EL QUE PODRAS SEGUIR LA COMPETICION PARTIDO A PARTIDO.
• UN POSTER CON LOS "MOMENTOS CUMBRE" DE LA HISTORIA DE LOS MUNDIALES A TODO COLOR.
• LOS BANDERINES AUTOADHESIVOS DE LOS PAISES PARTICIPANTES.
• UNA PEGATINA DE TELA CON EL EMBLEMA DE LOS MUNDIALES.

WORLD CUP CARNIVAL

U.S. Gold's football offering must rank as one of the cheekiest, most awful, hideous, and ultimately, most disappointing efforts in gaming history. Neil Reive dredges through the bowels of the back catalogue and discovers *World Cup Carnival* firmly wedged down the far reaches of the retro colon

June 1986 and Scotland had lost their first World Cup group stage game to the tournament newcomers Denmark, and they hadn't even played the mighty West Germany yet. In the second game Gordon Strachan, amazingly, put the Scots ahead with a fine goal, but the West Germans fought back to win 2-1. Scotland now needed to win their last group game to progress in the tournament. However, they struggled against a vicious tackling Uruguay, and limped off with a 0-0 draw; the Scots were coming home early again. But that was nothing compared to the shocking embarrassment that was the official football game released by U.S. Gold.

U.S. Gold managed to acquire the rights to produce the first FIFA World Cup licence game in 1986. The plan was to develop a great new football game and release it to coincide with the World Cup tournament. However, programming problems meant that the game couldn't be completed in time. To combat this issue of not having a completed game, U.S. Gold performed a move sneakier than Maradonna could ever dream of and passed another company's football game off as their own product.

Artic Computing had released a

U.S. Gold performed a move sneakier than Maradonna could ever dream of...

WORLD CUP CARNIVAL

Developer Artic/U.S. Gold **Publisher** U.S. Gold **Released** 1986 **Platforms** Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum **Genre** Sports

pretty mediocre football game, *World Cup Football*, a couple of years previously. U.S. Gold bought the rights to the code, made some *minor* cosmetic adjustments to the game, slapped a poster and wall chart in with the package, changed the title *slightly* to *World Cup Carnival*, and asked the punters to pay full price—as opposed to the budget price the original game was retailing for. Naturally, games magazines and gamers alike weren't too chuffed and quickly recognised that this was a turkey disguised with flash packaging and hype.

All versions (C64, Amstrad CPC, and Spectrum) feature pretty primitive and jerky graphics. The game itself features ten teams—although the Spectrum game has 24—and you can only choose eight to take part in the World Cup finals (Eh?). The matches are played out over three minutes with the playing area viewed from the side. There are no team selections, formations, tactics or anything, just two sets of teams struggling to stand upright as they seemingly skate around on the grass punting the ball two feet up into the air. Yes, you read right, TWO FEET (although the Spectrum version can't even muster two inches for some reason), and that's about as complicated as the game gets. There's no sliding, tackling, heading, jumping, or even handball shenanigans to get hot and bothered about here.

All the computer teams have the same amount of skill and AI—from Ireland to Brazil—so there's absolutely no realism at all. Player selection usually comes down to luck as the computer decides when to respond to your button presses, and by the time this happens the computer has drifted past your open defence. Pressing the fire button when the opposition is in the goalmouth makes your keeper leap horizontally up into the air—although this laughable dive only results in a save if the ball is directed squarely at him.

If you are some kind of perpetual self-torturer, and can actually put up with all these unforgiving gameplay issues (erm, I only did this for critical purposes), then the game can be completed very easily: there's the quarter finals, semi-finals, and the final itself—amounting to around ten minutes of playing time.

The game also features a pathetic, and obviously tacked-on, training mode—ball juggling, penalty kicks, and goalkeeping practice—which is just as awful as the main game, if not more so, due to the incredibly sluggish controls. Coupled with frustratingly bad gameplay, this makes for a pretty miserable gaming package all round.

Unsurprisingly, computer magazines gave the game a rough time upon its release: *Zzap!64* awarded the game with and overall rating of 11%, *Crash* gave it a slightly better 26%, but *Amstrad Action* weren't impressed at all, awarding it 0% (a record low score, which was never matched during the magazine's entire run).

The release was a bit of an embarrassment for U.S. Gold, but they did manage to regain some credibility following the release of future games that were much better - although to be honest, they couldn't do any worse. The whole shambles may now be but a distant memory, but it will never disappear completely; the game, the packaging, the hype, and the behind-the-scenes-buy-out-of-a-poor-game-to-release-as-your-own-cover-up all amount to one of the greatest retro gaming disasters of all time.

(C64) ...and Scotland score the winning goal in extra time, beating their auld rivals. 'rah!

(CPC) That'll be a goal then? Although it looks like 1966 all over again

(ZXS) Even the keeper's had enough and storms off the pitch in utter disbelief

(CPC) The keeper does his superman impression - although the ball is nowhere to be seen

The game also features a pathetic training mode—ball juggling, penalty kicks, and goalkeeping practice—which is just as awful as the main game, if not more so

Developer Gametec / Super Fighter Team **Publisher** Super Fighter Team **Platform** Sega Mega Drive / Genesis **Price** £29.00, $46.00, •37.00 **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** RPG

LEGEND OF WUKONG

If there's not much in the way of new Amstrad CPC games then surely new Mega Drive games are virtually non-existent? Not any more. Super Fighter Team are here with their second release for the 16-bit Sega in as many years. Neil Reive once again enters a world of strange creatures and big boss guardians...

GOING TO TOWN
During your travels, you'll come across lots of little villages, each one full of houses, shops, people... er... trees, roads, and all the other things you'd normally expect to find in villages. Feel free to wander around and mingle with the population...
Armour shop
The Inn
Temple
Casino
It seems okay for a youngster to gamble in this village and if you know what you're doing, you can win big time

It's odd how the Role Playing Game never really took off in the western world until the late 1990s. Japan, and the rest of the Far East, have always been crazy about these things. Even the likes of the *Phantasy Star* and *Shining Force* games couldn't convert many gamers over here. Sure, they were well received by those that actually played them, but on the whole RPGs were still a niche genre in the western world. What this means is that there are literally hundreds of Mega Drive RPGs that were never released outside of Japan, or in *Legend of Wukong*'s case, Taiwan. Super Fighter Team, who liked what they saw, set about converting and translating the game for a worldwide release. So for all intents and purposes, this is a new release for all English speaking nations.

If you've ever played a turn-based RPG then you'll be right at home with the gameplay, and even if you haven't played this type of game before then you are eased in gently. It is possible to play the game without even looking at the instructions because of the intuitive way the controls have been designed. Even the battle sequences are really easy to do, and let you carry out cunning strategies against the enemy. The next thing you will find out is that, rather than simply wandering around beating up monsters and collecting herbs, playing a great RPG is like reading a good book. And like all good books, *Legend of Wukong* has a good plot.

The game opens with a cut scene intro where a young Wukong is

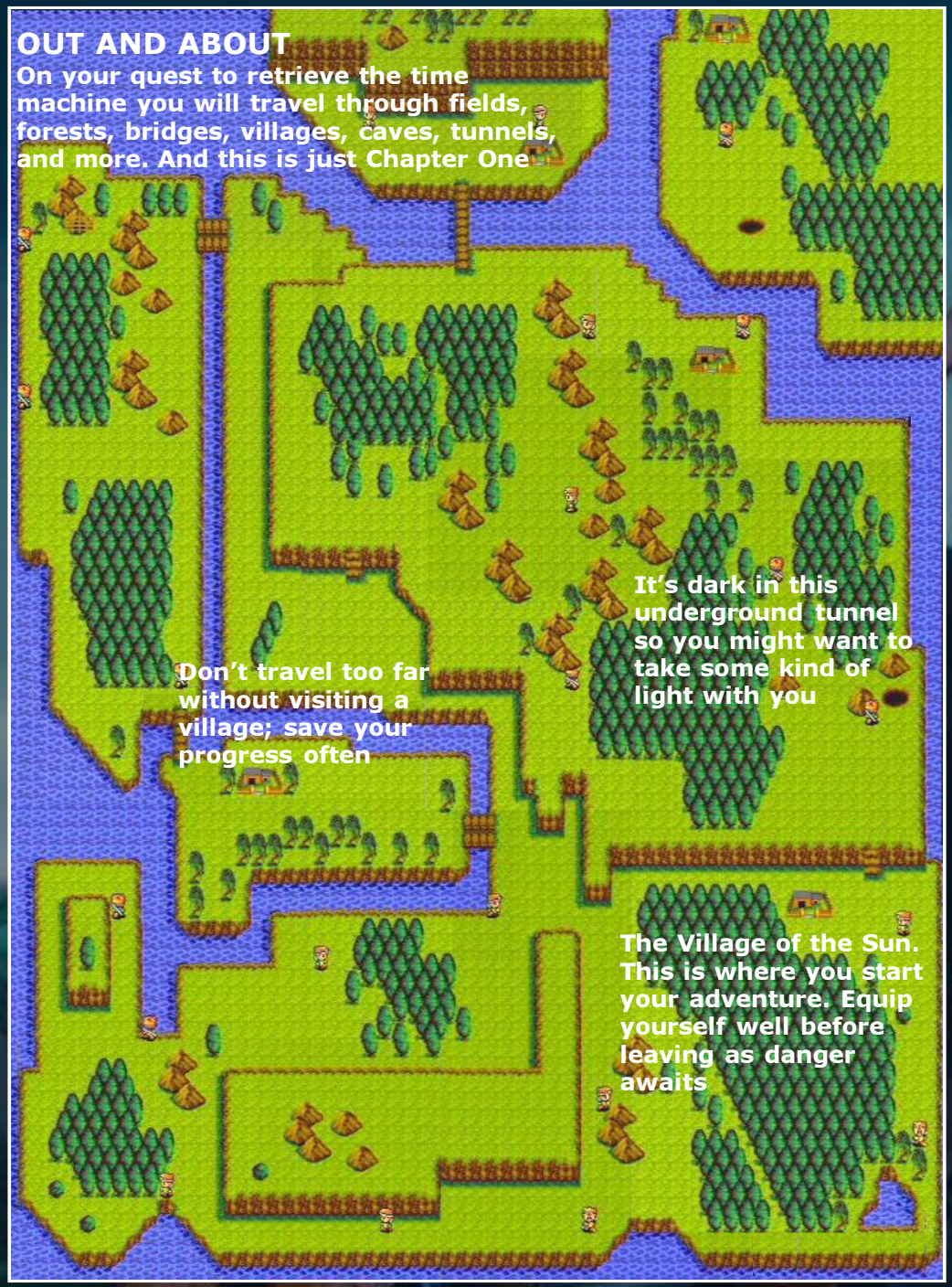
Playing a great RPG is like reading a good book. And like all good books, Legend of Wukong has a good plot

Battle tactics. Choose who you want to twat over the head first

The on screen menu can be accessed to Equip, use items...

LEGEND OF WUKONG

Developer Gametec / Super Fighter Team **Publisher** Super Fighter Team **Platform** Sega Mega Drive / Genesis **Price** £29.00, $46.00, •37.00 **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** RPG


OUT AND ABOUT
On your quest to retrieve the time machine you will travel through fields, forests, bridges, villages, caves, tunnels, and more. And this is just Chapter One
Don't travel too far without visiting a village; save your progress often
It's dark in this underground tunnel so you might want to take some kind of light with you
The Village of the Sun. This is where you start your adventure. Equip yourself well before leaving as danger awaits

Pigsy is quite useful at fighting with his, er, rake

The boss characters take some beating and so will you

visiting his neighbour Dr Tang who shows off his new invention: a time machine. Being a rather inquisitive little rascal, not to mention having an uncontrollable urge to press buttons, Wukong accidentally activates the time machine and he disappears from Dr Tang's lab. Wukong is sent hurtling through time to the doctor's test destination: the Village of the Sun during China's Tang Dynasty. As Wukong lies unconscious, a local monster nabs the time machine. Taking control of Wukong, it's your job to track down the time machine and get back home, but it's not going to be easy with a land full of monsters and demons.

As you wander around, you'll be able to talk to the inhabitants of the villages you pass through, gleaning helpful information and finding a couple of people who want to join your fight against the hordes of evil. Although you're following a strictly predetermined course the whole time, you always feel you're in control. And there are plenty of amusing diversions along the way.

If you are going to progress in the game then you need to get Wukong and his friends valuable experience points. Exploring the world for the time machine inevitably results in the encounter of many monsters and demons, which break out in battle. Combat is represented in a side view screen with your team on the right hand side facing the enemy from the left. All your team's portraits are at the bottom of the screen with Level (LV), Health Points (HP) and Magic Points (MP) displayed along with their current status (healthy, weak, fainted, etc.). The battle itself is turn based and you must instruct your team one by one to attack, perform a spell, run, etc. Once the battle ends, experience points, gold, and possibly a level up are gained.

Our worthy hero's will alone is

Although you're following a strictly predetermined course the whole time, you always feel you're in control. And there are plenty of amusing diversions along the way

Developer Gametec / Super Fighter Team **Publisher** Super Fighter Team **Platform** Sega Mega Drive / Genesis **Price** £29.00, $46.00, •37.00 **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** RPG

NOT SO FAST....

While I agree with most of what is said in the main review, I have many issues *with Legend of Wukong*. Firstly, the difficulty, especially at the beginning, is quite steep. I had been told that I was best to get Wukong to level 15 before attempting to defeat the first demon boss and after several failed attempts—swift ones at that—I understood why. This meant wandering around for at least two hours stumbling through battles for the necessary experience points needed to level up.

Then there's the battles themselves, which are randomly generated, even in areas that you've cleared before, and can get annoying after the second, third, and fourth time. The caves you have to explore are also a chore to get through, as you will always meet with a dead end and as such encounter countless random battles doing so.

However, despite its faults, there is a decent game here. The presentation is good, graphics and sound is adequate, and the plot is intriguing. However, I certainly wouldn't rate it as highly as Neil has, and would knock off at least seven percent from the overall rating.

Duffman

enough to carry him through the first few battles successfully, however, it isn't long before the upgrade of armour and weapons is vital. So it's just as well that all the villages supply the equipment you are looking for. There's the weapons, armour, and items shop where you can buy or sell the appropriate equipment. You will also discover other buildings in the villages: the casino (a smart place to win gold, if you know how to play it wisely), the inn (where you rest to replenish energy and also where you can save your progress), temple, and residency buildings.

The package itself consists of the game (a 16 meg authentic plastic shell cartridge), a 16-page colour instruction manual, and a plastic clamshell case with an authentic early Mega Drive style colour insert. The cartridge is not only playable on a Mega Drive or Genesis, but is compatible with other systems like the Nomad, 32X, CDX, or X'Eye.

Legend of Wukong scores for accessibility, easily understood design and for being great fun to play. It also comes up trumps for graphics and sound. The graphics are simple and clear where they need to be—when you're wandering around villages, for example. Battles look particularly attractive with animated portraits on the status screen portraying the effects of the fights. Although the music can get annoying at times, it's generally very well done, with some good tunes.

I haven't been glued to my Mega Drive since a certain *Shining Force II* was in the cartridge slot, and that is testament to the quality of *Legend of Wukong*. The main things that I look for in a game—atmosphere and

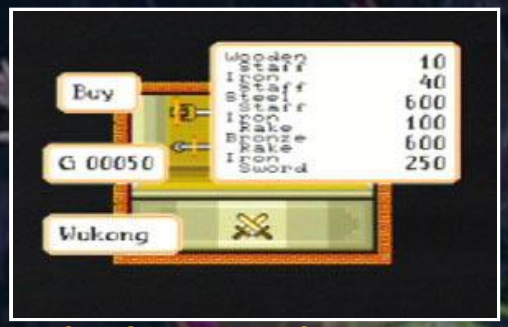
I haven't been glued to my Mega Drive since a certain *Shining Force II* was in the cartridge slot, and that is testament to the quality of *Legend of Wukong*

It's magic time as Wukong engulfs the enemy in flames

Hurrah, I'm a hero. What do you mean that's just Chapter One?

irresistible playability are present here. Yes, there's the price to consider, but it provides good value for money—there must be weeks of playing time here. It's undoubtedly the best game I've played in ages, and I urge all Mega Drive owners to consider purchasing it immediately. And what I'm not going to do is qualify that with an "if you like this sort of thing". Everyone can enjoy a game like this—it's that great.

Neil Reive



Buying time. Just make sure you buy wisely and can use it

THE VERDICT

GRAPHICS **85%**
All game graphics (cut scenes, maps, battle screens) are presented well.

SOUND **87%**
A wide selection of tunes and melodies greet the ears—all appropriate to the on screen action.

GAMEPLAY **90%**
Though there is much depth to the gameplay the control method is very straight forward.

STAYING POWER **92%**
The game is enormous. That in itself ensures a long lasting challenge. Just as well there's a save function.

OVERALL **90%**
A skillfully crafted piece of Mega Drive gaming with a good mix of action and adventure to satisfy all

SUPER FIGHTER TEAM

VIDEOGAME DEVELOPMENT PRODUCTION AND PUBLISHING

WWW.SUPERFIGHTER.COM

With the great nostalgia feeling from playing *Legend of Wukong* still buzzing in his body, Neil Reive contacted Brandon Cobb, the President of Super Fighter Team, for some background information on the game and the company...

LEGEND OF WUKONG
DEVELOPED BY GAMTEC
©2008 SUPER FIGHTER TEAM
LV 0047 HP 1200 MP 0605 WUKONG (HEALTHY)
LV 0047 HP 1076 MP 0981 PIGSY (HEALTHY)
LV 0046 HP 0976 MP 0981 WUJING (HEALTHY)

Neil Reive: For the uninitiated, can you please introduce yourself and tell us a little more about Super Fighter Team?
Brandon Cobb: I'm an adult who never grew out of the imagination that childhood gave me. Humor and the entertainment it brings are paramount to every aspect of my life. I won't give up on my hopes, dreams and passions for anything. I'm a simple man with clear objectives.

Super Fighter Team was formed at a time when all the things I truly loved about video games were fading out of the industry. Founding the company was my best effort to save them.

How did the *Legend of Wukong* project come about?
The game came highly recommended from our *Beggar Prince* script programmer, Derrick Sobodash. Based on his urging I bought a copy of the Taiwanese original, and within moments of trying it felt a connection. It had charm, cleverness, some funny characters and an interesting back story. Most of all though, it jumped out at me as a real sort of "do it yourself" RPG project. I was inspired to add new things to the game while strengthening its existing content, a thought that made me energized and excited.

What made the team decide to work on the Mega Drive/ Genesis rather than any other platform? Following your previous release, Beggar Prince, why choose to do another Role Playing Game?
There just wasn't anything going on

"Within moments of trying [the Taiwanese original] felt a connection. It had charm, cleverness, some funny characters and an interesting back story"

for the Genesis; no new games on cartridge, and we wanted to change that. Originally, we toyed around with the idea of porting *Super Fighter* over, even producing a very limited demo back in 2001. That never took off for a number of reasons. *Beggar Prince* came about and we decided it was going to be "the" new Genesis game.

As for why we've chosen a few RPGs, well, I'm a writer. RPGs allow me to use my ability to great potential, entertaining thousands. That's a very touching benefit. As well, RPGs immerse players into a new world in which they can imagine, dream, and feel new things. It's great fun and there's immense replay value.

Some fuss has been made from certain forums over the 'brand new' labelling of the game as they feel that it is just a conversion of the original Taiwan game. However, the team have actually reprogrammed a lot of the game, haven't they? Can you clarify this issue and tell us exactly what has been done to bring *Legend of Wukong* to the Western World?

What I hope people would come to understand about us, more than anything, is the amount of passion and dedication we put into each of our games. After negotiating proper permissions from a copyright holder, we go in without any help from the original programmers, and without any source code, and perfect the games we so greatly admire. Localization is delicate and painstaking, but we do so much more than that. Representatives of the companies that we partner with have described our results as "deeply moving", among other such elegant superlatives. You don't get heartfelt responses such as these from a simple "conversion".

Legend of Wukong really gave us a chance to shine; to show the world what we were really capable of when it came to enhancing and improving upon the existing framework of a game. Along with localizing the game, we also dug in deep and reprogrammed what I would estimate to be around 30% of its code. This included, among other feats: extensive rewrites to the combat engine, the addition of new magic, adding a variable width font, improving the save game system, enhancing magic and items and their uses. I'm very thankful I decided to have us proceed with the game in this fashion. Even if nobody outside the development team ever fully realizes the scope of our accomplishment, it was a personal need of mine to deliver a stellar update to an already solid game—and we achieved that goal so well, I can't help but feel proud.

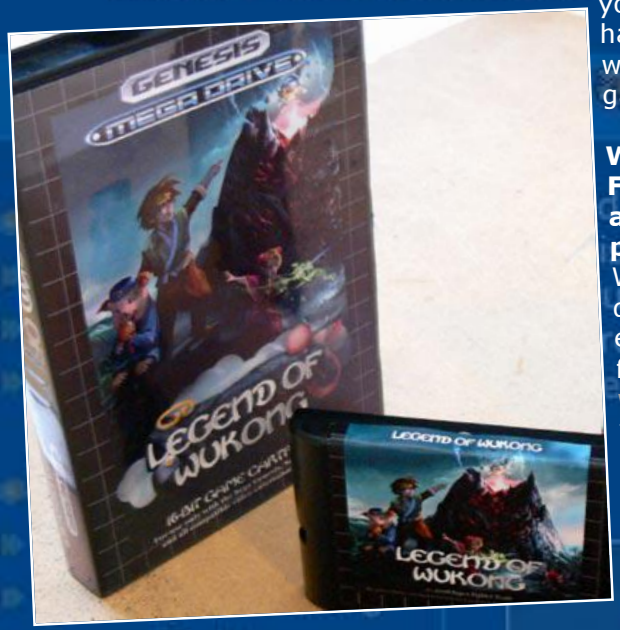
"Along with localizing the game, we also dug in deep and reprogrammed what I would estimate to be around 30% of its code"

What kind of software/hardware was used to develop *Legend of Wukong*? How long was the development period and were there any problems during the process?

Legend of Wukong took a little over a year to complete in full. We make use of custom designed development boards and equipment for each of our Genesis games, and code is written in assembly. The only way we do testing is on real hardware, as that's the only way that matters. Testing is performed using every model of the Genesis or Mega Drive you can think of, including clones and compatibles, plus the kitchen sink.

***Legend of Wukong* is now available to buy through the official website (http://www.legendofwukong.com). What kind of packaging/content can buyers expect to get? Is there a limited number of copies available?**
At Super Fighter Team, our focus is always to deliver the highest quality product for the benefit and enjoyment of our customers the world over. In the case of *Legend of Wukong* that means they will receive the game cartridge with authentic plastic shell, full color 16 page instruction manual and plastic clamshell case complete with full color insert. Everything is produced brand new from scratch by our factory. The result is an absolutely beautiful product for a low price.

As the purpose of creating new games for classic systems is to get them out there to everyone who wants to play and enjoy them, we don't feel it very sensible to "limit" the number of copies we produce. This is an experience we are excited and proud to extend to anyone and everyone who wants to play and enjoy a new game for their favorite classic system. As such, we'll continue to produce copies of this game and of our others so long as there is reasonable demand to do so.



Not many people will have a working Mega Drive/Genesis these days, so will the game ever be released—at a small price—as a downloadable ROM in the future?
We produce new games for classic systems, not for emulators. If you're taking the actual system hardware out of the picture, what's the point of making new games for it?

What's next for the Super Fighter Team? Are there any plans for further game projects?
We're currently managing the development of *Zaku*, an exceptional horizontal shooter for the Atari Lynx (http://www.zaku-lynx.com). It's fast, impressive, 100% new and original and best of all: it's fun to play.
If you own a Nokia phone running the series 60 Symbian platform, you're invited to pick up *Super Fighter Block Battle* as a free download (http://www.sfblockbattle.com). We had that title in development for quite a while, but the wait was definitely worth it.

> "If you love something and want to share it with the world, hold onto that feeling and never let anyone take it from you no matter what"

Is there any advice that you can give to any budding independent developer/publisher out there?
Strive only for greatness, because your customers and fans deserve nothing less. Don't cut corners or costs in your production. Get spirited and excited; close your eyes and touch your dreams. Don't let anyone, EVER, tell you that success is unreachable. Make yourself proud and show the world what you're capable of. Most importantly—do it from the heart! As long as there is at least one person left to keep the fire going, it will never burn out and as a result, we'll always have a place to come to, to be warm together. If you love something and want to share it with the world, hold onto that feeling and never let anyone take it from you no matter what.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. Is there anything else you'd like to add?
It's my great pleasure, thanks for giving me the opportunity. The work we do at Super Fighter Team makes me feel alive. I truly hope we can always inspire that same feeling in the people who play our games. Keep playing, friends—and never let dreams die!

Developer Richard Bayliss, Frank Gasking **Publisher** Psytronik Software **Platform** Commodore 64 **Price** Free download **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** Shoot-'em-up

SUB HUNTER

Take an old Vic 20 game, a poor C64 conversion, and what do you have? The desire to remake the game as *Sub Hunter*. Duffman dives deep as he attempts to rescue mankind from the mutants of the ocean

Something is wrong; huge fish are roaming the sea and threatening the lives of innocent swimmers. It is soon discovered that a scientific experiment to increase the number of fish has gone *slightly* wrong to say the least. To cover up their disastrous project, several barrels of radioactive waste are dumped into the sea causing the mutation of the sea life. Taking control of the submarine (charged with infinite torpedoes) you must traverse the undersea landscape, deal with mutant fish, enemy submarine (who don't want anyone meddling in this incident), and protect the human swimmers by picking them up.

The game is based on *Sub Hunt,* which was originally a Vic 20 game later converted to the C64 in 1984—albeit with mixed results.

With the desire for an updated conversion, Richard Bayliss produced *Sub Hunter*, but this wasn't just a straight forward update. Extra levels were created, more features added, enhanced presentation, creating an all-together new game. *Sub Hunter* was developed by over a period of four years with additional help on design and graphics from Frank Gasking.

The game was originally available at the end of 2008 as a cassette tape through Psytronik Software. Not only does the purchase get you the tape, but also a specially produced colour tape inlay and a link to a tape ROM file for use with C64 emulators. However, as promised, a download version was made available at Christmas. This two-disk ROM download not only features the full game, but a whole host of extras (previews, demos, and even a mini game *Sub Duel*).

Sub Hunter is a shoot-'em-up with a difference: not only do you shoot the enemy, but you've got to carry out rescue missions as well. This makes for a very interesting

There's a swimmer. Quick rescue him before he bites it

Bombs away. That'll learn 'em to bite my swimmers

The calm before the storm in the impressive intro scenes

Aaargh! Look at the size of that thing. And that fish is big too

This isn't just a straight forward update. Extra levels were created, more features added, enhanced presentation, creating an all-together new game.

SUB HUNTER

Developer Richard Bayliss, Frank Gasking **Publisher** Psytronik Software **Platform** Commodore 64 **Price** Free download **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** Shoot-'em-up

Crabs, crabs everywhere and not a single one is nice

PSYTRONIK SOFT
MENU PROGRAMMING BY RICHARD BAYLISS
CHARSET BY JON WELLS, LOGO BY JASON
MUSIC BY FANJA/PLUSH DESIGN
1. SCEPTRE DEMO 2. SUB HUNTER DEMO
3. MAYHEM DEMO 4. ASTROMINE DEMO
5. CITY BOMBER DEMO

The disk contains loads of extras. Just look at them

You can even play the original Vic 20 game, *Sub Hunt*

There's a mini game, *Sub Duel*, where two players duel it out

The ocean is cleared for the swimmer to get to safety

game where strategy can play a vital part; will you shoot away like a maniac or play it cool while carrying out rescue missions? After all, the main mission is to rescue the swimmers, and if that means dodging the mutant fish, instead of shooting them, then so be it.

Each level features a different situation: level one scrolls from right to left where you negotiate mutant fish and enemy subs while rescuing swimmers, level two consists of dropping depth charges onto the required number of mutant fish (within a time limit) to allow the swimmers to swim to safety, level three is a dive and rescue mission, and so on. The mutant sea creatures come in all shapes and sizes too; there's the mutant fish, squid, crabs, jellyfish. There's something new to see on each level.

You will need to keep an eye on the oxygen levels as well because it drops steadily, and drops further if you kill a swimmer by mistake, making the game a race against the clock. Leave the controls alone and your sub will slowly sink towards the seabed, requiring you to constantly manoeuvre with the joystick. This keeps you on your toes by making you concentrate 100% all the time.

The use of colour and graphics is excellent, with some stunning parallax scrolling on the sea background. Sound is provided with an upbeat soundtrack and solid spot effects can be heard throughout. With twenty-five levels in total (each one with varied gameplay and five swimmers to rescue), bonus levels, and mutant guardian encounters, and the mammoth amount of extras, this package is going to keep you very busy.

Duffman

The mutant sea creatures come in all shapes and sizes too; there's the mutant fish, squid, crabs, jellyfish. There's something new to see on each level

THE VERDICT

GRAPHICS **89%**
Impressive presentation, scrolling and colourful sprites throughout. No major complaints here

SOUND **90%**
Good soundtrack while the game plays. Although, it would have been nice to have more spot effects

GAMEPLAY **85%**
Quite tough and awkward to control the sub in certain sections. Otherwise smooth handling

STAYING POWER **95%**
Huge game plus the whole package with its demos, extras, and mini game, give it great longevity

OVERALL **88%**

A polished game and one which should be tried by all gamers, not just by C64 fans

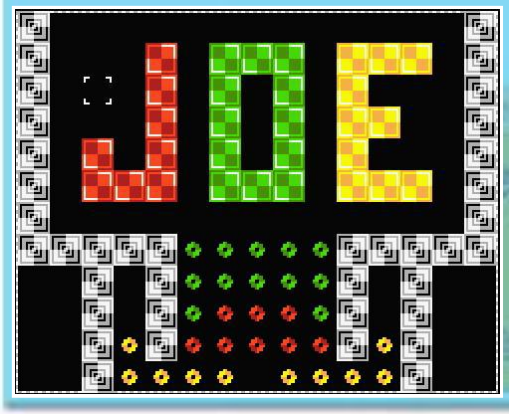
Developer Paxanga Soft (original developer: Akuma no Houkon) **Platform** MSX **Price** Free download **Genre** Puzzle

PERFECT FIT

Puzzle games are ten to a penny on retro computers, but is *Pefect Fit* really the perfect puzzle game for the MSX? Duffman—who has perfect 20/20 vision—takes a good look and reports back with some interesting news

Perfect Fit may look familiar to anyone who has played *Puzznic*, but while both games may look similar, they play quite differently. Originally a GP2X game developed by The Devils Jester, the game has now been remade for the MSX by MsxKun. Coming in on a cartridge ROM file and 32k, they have done wonders to create this game.

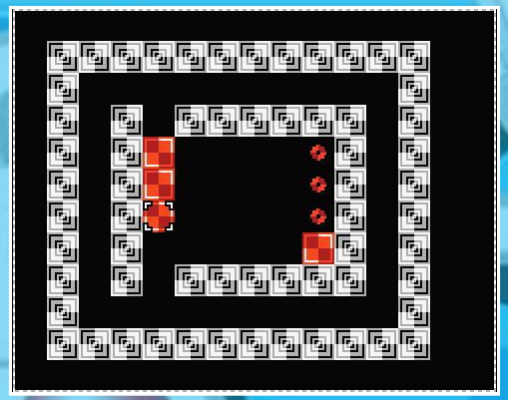
It involves placing the coloured blocks on top of a co-ordinating colour target circle. To move a block, you need to move the cursor over to the block, hold down fire and move the joystick in the direction you want it to move. However, the block will not stop until it hits a wall, another block, or the surrounding play area's border. Once the block comes to a stop, the cursor is free to continue with another block or move the same one.



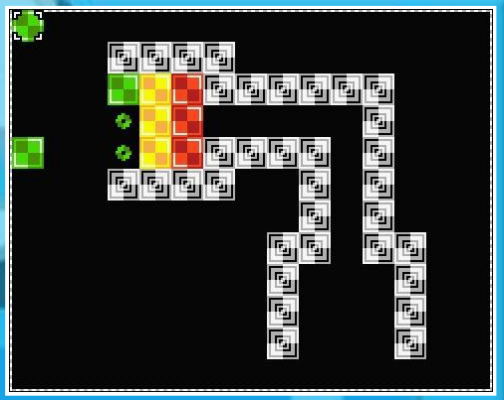
If you manage to get all blocks onto their corresponding colour targets, then the level is complete. Once five levels have been completed, and every fifth level after that, you will receive a password. This will enable commencement from that level in future play. The puzzles are arranged in logical order and the first few levels are easy enough, but they get progressively harder.

Later levels will require you to use one or even two blocks with each other to create a wall so that you can move into the target circle. Move the wrong block at the wrong time and you soon get yourself into trouble. It's all too easy to end up with the blocks going awry.

There are three game modes to choose from: normal (normal blocks, normal targets, and normal walls), extended (special tiles, moving walls, direction blocks), and user (play user creation levels). The menu is full of options including start, continue, level set, tile set, music / SFX only, load level, editor. The game's editor feature allows the player to create their very own levels. Using the block, target, wall icons, it can be pretty simple to have your own fiendishly difficult puzzles.



Early puzzles can be quite simple to complete with just one colour...



...however, later levels include harder obstacles and multiple colours to play with

Graphics are colourful and adequate. After all, there's only so much you can do with a square block. The main thing is that the blocks and target circles are clearly identifiable.

Music is well catered for and fans of Guns 'n' Roses may recognise the title music as it is an instrumental sample of Sweet Child Of Mine, and it sounds good. The main game music is also up to scratch. However, there is only the odd spot effect to round things off sonic wise.

Gameplay is easy enough to grasp, but mastering it will take skill and patience. With twenty-five levels, and endless user defined levels, the game will keep you busy for some time.

Duffman

THE VERDICT

GRAPHICS **80%**
Nothing outstanding or groundbreaking here, but it is adequate and colourful

SOUND **85%**
Good soundtracks throughout with the odd sound effect scattered around the levels

GAMEPLAY **88%**
Very easy to grasp the basics, but patience is needed to master the different puzzles

STAYING POWER **91%**
Twenty-five levels and a level editor means that the game will last longer than usual

OVERALL **87%**
Surprisingly, this is a great little game and one which has come out from nowhere. Excellent stuff

Developer Computer Emuzone Games Studio **Platform** ZX Spectrum 48k / 128k **Price** Free download **Genre** Shoot-'em-up

SHOOT REDUX

Shoot Redux: Marifrisky Space Warrior, to give the game its full title, is an old fashioned arcade blaster involving coffee. The editor is rubbish at shmups *(hoi! - Ed)*, so we enlisted the talents of Gnome instead...

Shoot Redux, a remake of an obscure little Speccy game called *Shoot*, is an indie and obviously freeware installment in the CEZ Minigames series, which is none other than the series that retro maestros Computer Emuzone created in order to quickly try out new programming techniques and impressive programming tricks via short and sweet games. Apparently, it also is a way to see just how preposterous and lovely a simple shmup plot can be.

Marifrisky, you see, the main character of *Shoot Redux*, is running out of coffee, and you—none other than the player—have to make sure things never reach the critical point of *no coffee*. To avoid said terrible tragedy you get to fly to the grocery store at the other end of the galaxy and through a nasty planetary system controlled by evil mafia leader Prepuccio Petrucci. Then some Martians and hot Japanese ladies get thrown in and things get truly complicated, especially if your Spanish skills, well, just aren't there. Point is you have to guide Marifrisky to the coffee, shoot some sort of space coffee while getting there, blast intergalactic Mafiosi and avoid getting destroyed. Oh, and Marifrisky seems to be on the feminine side of humanity.

The game itself is an extremely simple and quite playable shoot-'em-up in the vague style of *Space Invaders* with some *Galaxians* and a few modest new ideas thrown in, that sports nine difficulty levels, and only utilizes three keys: left (O), right (P), fire (Space). Simply move from left to right, shoot, kill, don't be killed and go for a high-score. This is after all a short and simple game that's perfect—nay, designed—for some multiplayer ZX Spectrum based high score competitions, even though apparently a proper ending is rumoured to have been included too.

The single most impressive thing about *Shoot Redux* is the quality of the graphics. From the brilliant loading screen, to the relatively complex and definitely amazing (parallax) scrolling star field, to the explosions, to the well designed sprites, to the miraculous lack of colour clash, everything looks fantastic. And I don't mean this in a purely technical sense either. The quality of the art present here is way above average and Computer Emuzone even mentions an extra end sequence graphical treat... Ultimate eat your heart out.

Oh, and the sound is rather nice too. On the humble 48k Speccy too. Imagine that.

Gnome

Shoot the coffee asteroids and the enemy ships. Easy, huh?

Shoot the coffee asteroids and the enemy ships. Yes, again

Pow. A coffee rock is hit. And there's an enemy ship coming on cue

THE VERDICT

GRAPHICS 90%
Some of the technically most impressive gfx I've ever seen on a Spectrum. Lovely art too

SOUND 83%
Great intro theme and decent – though simple– in-game effects

GAMEPLAY 76%
Simple, fun, intuitive, tough and repetitive. Definitely not groundbreaking

STAYING POWER 66%
Well, it can be addictive, but not *that* addictive

OVERALL 79%

A fantastic tech demo that is actually fun to play, especially when competing against (preferably drunk) mates. High score chasing can be fun, you know

Developer Kevin Thacker **Publisher** Cronosoft **Released** Now **Platforms** Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum **Genre** Puzzle

SUDOKU

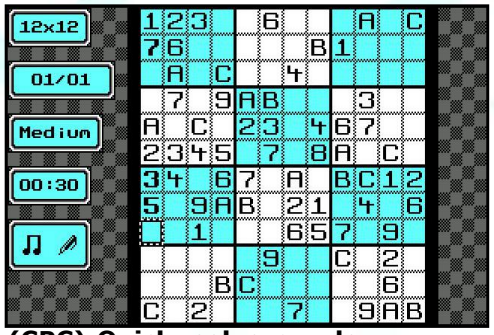
A rare new offering for the Amstrad CPC (the Speccy and C64 seem to have all the new games these days), giving Richard Goulstone the incentive to purchase a cassette copy and see how well the game fares on his trusty old machine

It has been 16 years since I last bought a new game release for the Amstrad CPC, so I was very excited when I recently received my copy of *Sudoku* all the way from the UK. I bought mine from the official distributor Retrogamez, who I have dealt with before and are a top notch company.

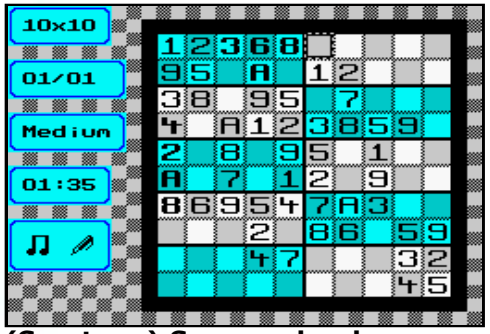
First off, the packaging is first class: the cassette and inlay are of commercial standard and would not look out of place in 1988. The inlay printing is a tad small, but gives you all of the instructions you need to play the game. The game loaded first time on my 24-year-old Amstrad CPC464, and only takes a few minutes to load. The first thing you are greeted with is the title screen, which is a bit bland—if you are going to make us wait several minutes for a loading screen, at least make it a bit interesting.

As the title suggests, this is a computer version of *Sudoku*, which can be a rather addictive numerical puzzle game. Kevin Thacker has done an excellent job of converting a pen and paper game to the computer. *Sudoku* is a number logic game where you must have numbers 1-9 appear once only in each row, column, or sub-grid. The puzzle is completed when all spaces in the grid have been filled.

The initial development of the game started around three years ago, but was delayed due to the design of the puzzle function. Finally, in September, the game was announced as completed. A real CPC musician, Herve Monchatre, composed the game's soundtrack, and it shows as jaunty oriental themed music plays throughout.



(CPC) Quick, solve puzzle...



(Spectrum) So many levels

The options and menus are very intuitive and easy to follow. There are three difficulty levels: Easy, medium, hard, and you can set the grid to be anything from 4x4 up to 12x12. There are also ten set levels or you can generate a random board of numbers. A timer keeps track of how long it takes you to complete each puzzle. Once you complete the game you get flashing stars and music, which is nice the first time, but it does go on a bit and you can't start another game until it finishes.

The controls in the actual game are easy to use and you can enter and erase numbers easily as you try to work out what goes where. The keyboard or a joypad can be used to control the cursor. The pen/pencil icon is for toggling between erm... pen and pencil mode, while the spanner icon is the options. The main difference between pen and pencil mode cell entries is that if you enter a pencil mark into a cell that already has a pencil mark then it will be replaced. However, if the entry is done in pen, then it cannot be overwritten by pencil mode. Clicking on the X icon can delete either pen or pencil entries.

Although the Amstrad CPC464 was the lead platform used for development of the game, the ZX Spectrum version is almost identical in every way: it looks, sounds, and plays just like the CPC version. If you like *Sudoku*, and own an Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum (or can even get hold of an emulator), then buy this game. My advice is to buy the cassette version - there is nothing like playing it on a real machine. I hope Cronosoft release further Amstrad CPC cassette games as I for one will buy whatever they make - any company that produces new software for the 8-bit machines deserves to be supported.

Richard Goulstone

THE VERDICT

GRAPHICS **65%**
Not really a graphical game, but the colours used make everything easy to read.

SOUND **85%**
Great to hear the AY chip put through its paces, there's nothing like the sound of 8-bit tunes!

GAMEPLAY **75%**
If you are a Sudoku or puzzle fan then this is the perfect game for you.

STAYING POWER **85%**
So many custom options and an almost endless amount of random games...

OVERALL **78%**
Very impressed with this offering. May Cronosoft continue to produce many more games.

Developer Jonathan Cauldwell **Platform** ZX Spectrum **Price** Free download **Genre** Puzzle

ALBATROSITY

You would be forgiven for thinking that this was an entry into the recent Retro Remakes Competition's 'Mash Up' category. Duffman loads the game up to find out why

With all the platform and sports games on the Spectrum, how do you keep new releases staying fresh, but with a familiarity to it so that it's not too different? You merge two games together, and in this case, a platformer and a golf game. Not too dissimilar to *Soccer Kid* or *Marko's Magic Football*—which mixed platforming action with football—Albatrosity mixes platform action with golf.

The aim of the game, as it is with real golf, is to get the small white ball into the hole. However, here we have platform obstacles that have to be overcome with precision hits of the ball. You start off with a limited amount of balls (rubber, steel, and sticky). The rubber ball bounces off the walls and needs to be controlled carefully; the steel ball is heavy and useful for breaking through barriers, while the sticky ball literally sticks to walls and platforms.

The ball has a small pointer which you can move around with the joystick or keyboard and once you've set the power, one press of the fire button sends it towards the desired direction. Hopefully, the ball will avoid any water hazards and end up at the flag where you are taken to the next hole.

Each shot you take will reduce the count of the balls at your disposal, so use them wisely. Fortunately, after completion of a hole, you will gain extra balls. Careful timing of the final shot to the flag is needed and if the directional target is off by a small amount then the ball will likely career off into a wall or a hazard.

The graphics are adequate for the type of game-just don't expect lush fairways or greens. The soundtrack is jolly enough as it plays away throughout. The game plays quite well—as you'd expect from programmer Jonathan Cauldwell—and everything seems to work as it should.

Albatrosity is a good natured game at heart, however, it can get repetitive as you progress and some holes can be very frustrating. To combat this, the game can be played by up to four players, which will make the game a little more fun to play when solitary play wears a bit thin. There's also the hole editor feature that will extend the lifeline of the game even further.

Duffman

Weeee. Across the water (yes, that's water) it goes, where it ends up, no one knows

The steel ball is great for bashing though breakable barriers like this. Just use it wisely as they're limited

Point the directional line towards the flag and it's there. You hope, anyway

THE VERDICT

GRAPHICS **70%**
Not great, but gets the job done, and it all moves well enough. Quite colourful though

SOUND **65%**
Good soundtrack throughout, but not much in the way of sound effects

GAMEPLAY **83%**
Very easy to play, but some of the tougher holes will take nerves of steel

STAYING POWER **81%**
Multiplayer options and a hole editor make the game last longer than it would normally

OVERALL **80%**

A nice little game, but can get quite frustrating and repetitive

PAUL KOOISTRA: INTERVIEW

MARK HALL TALKS TO PROGRAMMER PAUL KOOISTRA ABOUT LIFE, FILMS, ADVICE, AND HIS AMSTRAD CPC GAME : THE MIGHTY FINE SHOOT-'EM-UP *STAR SABRE*

MH: How did you get into programming, was it through friends or did you simply see a game and think "wow, I could do that"?
PK: Early on in High School my parents bought my brother and I a CPC464... I was interested in learning how to program it from the outset, but later I, along with some of my friends with C64s, decided we were going to get into making games. We only got as far as making some things in SEUCK, Quill, GAC, and Laser Basic and not much was finished for my part, but I did manage to gain some knowledge of assembly before the 8-bit era came to an end and I put that aside at the time.

MH: What Amstrad or other computer system game would you most like to have been involved with back in the day?
PK: Nothing comes to mind. I don't think I'd want to have been involved with games I enjoyed playing or that impressed me somehow, anyway.

MH: *Star Sabre* is the only CPC game you've ever released, how proud are you of this project? And was there anything you wanted to put in but couldn't due to memory restrictions?
PK: I'm pretty happy with it, as I largely achieved what I set out to do. My focus was to try to make a shooter on the CPC at what I considered an acceptable frame

The monkeys now ruled space; they'd taken over

Oh, no! Oh, Jesus! They've taken over! *(I know! - Ed)*

"[WinAPE is] such a great development tool, I almost don't think of it as an emulator any more!"

rate, with no slow down, good sprite count and collision detection with a little leeway to it. I believe I just about managed that, with the only thing I'm not quite happy with in the end being the sprite count.

I had to leave out a few things for memory, specifically a high score table, enemies made of several sprites appearing during a level, and secondary weapon pick-ups for the player. Of course, more generally there's the lack of music and the very limited graphics space, but those were issues I expected from the beginning with targeting 64k and there really wasn't much I could do about them beyond taking something else out.

MH: Would you ever do another game, or a sequel maybe?
PK: A sequel isn't likely. I am thinking about different ideas for other possible games, but I haven't settled on anything yet.

MH: What advice would you give to anybody attempting to write their own game, especially on the CPC or CPCplus?
PK: Be prepared for it to take a lot of time! For the CPC I'd have to recommend using WinAPE for development. It's such a great development tool, I almost don't think of it as an emulator any more!

MH: What is the best game you've ever played, across any system?
PK: Probably *Ico*. I could name quite a few games for this, as there are some genres and games I just wouldn't compare. But of all the games I've played over the years and just been grabbed by, I think *Ico* is the one I've had the least misgivings about at the end of it all.

MH: Desert island games, what ten games would you take with you?
PK: *Soul Calibur* (DC), *Contra 3* (SNES), *Super Ghouls & Ghosts* (SNES), *Rez* (DC), *Oblivion* (360), *RType 3* (SNES), *XCom: Enemy Unknown* (PS1), *1942* (Arcade), *Timesplitters 2* (GC), and *Rygar* (Arcade).

MH: Some call the CPC the also-ran, but was it really as bad as everyone makes out?
PK: Yes, it must be since I always get the "wrong" thing! I've got an HD DVD player, plasma rather than an LCD TV, a DC originally instead of a PS2, and (arguably I guess) a SNES instead of a Mega Drive... In fact the only blot on my record for buying against "consensus" was getting a PlayStation after the SNES, but with a new entrant having a marketing campaign like 'Society Against PlayStation', how was I supposed to know?

MH: One final question, what is your favourite movie of all time?
PK: Well, again I wouldn't really say there is one all time favourite, but for the sake of the argument, let's say *Aliens*.

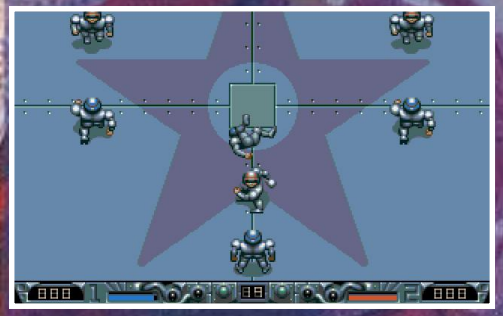
RETRO RESPECT

SPEEDBALL 2

Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe, **to give its full title, is arguably the Bitmap Brothers' most famous, and best, game. It was released for many formats including the Amiga, Atari ST, Sega Mega Drive, and even the C64. Some day, all games will be played this way**

SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE

Developer The Bitmap Brothers **Publisher** Image Works **Released** 1991 **Platforms** Amiga, Atari ST, DOS, Commodore 64, Mega Drive, Master System, Gameboy, GBA. **Video clip** YouTube



(Amiga) Start the game fast and hard: take a sliding tackle to the opposition attacker...

The Atari ST version plays virtually the same: fast, frenetic, fun, and, don't forget, violence

(DOS) Amongst the violence, you might even score the occasional goal or two

Taking the basic ideas behind *Speedball*, the legendary Bitmap Brothers used the best parts of the first game, and incorporated them with a whole host of new features for the sequel. When the game loads, you can't help but notice the impressive opening theme soundtrack, which is suitably futuristic in its style.

The game's main options include the league, which consists of two divisions with eight teams in each, the cup competition, which is played over two legs, and a knockout tournament. There is even a full-on management option, although the game is best played with you in direct control.

You take control of struggling team Brutal Deluxe, the worst team in Speedball history. It's your job to transform the team, gain promotion and win the first division league title. As player manager you have the ability to add specific talents and improvements to each of your team's players. You can groom your team into champions by buying and selling players or purchasing upgrades for your player's kit.

The Speedball sport itself is a futuristic handball/football hybrid and is played out in an indoor arena with two teams of six players: one goalkeeper, two defenders, two midfielders, and three attackers, who are all body armoured and ready to do battle over the small steel ball. The sport lacks any rules so any physical contact is allowed and is necessary to succeed.

When the match begins, you realise the extent to which this sequel had been improved. Whereas before, the pitch was only a few screens high and scrolled vertically only, the *Speedball 2* arena spans across horizontally and vertically, and boasts a number of new improved features. While the mainstay of the game, the goals, hadn't changed, each side was now littered with useful bonus-giving gates and features.

As well as the many additions on the pitch, the game is faster, more frantic, and more violent. Each player has their own attributes and can withstand a certain amount of knocks. However, as the match progresses and the player takes more beatings, their resistance will deplete until they finally collapse, having to be stretchered off the pitch by two robotic medics.

The control system is easy to use: the joystick controls the players who can move, slide, and tackle for the ball, depending on the situation. When in possession of the ball, the player can throw it, the strength is determined by how long the fire button is held

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Can't be bothered training your ramshackle of a team? Buy in the talent from the transfer market

Reach for the stars. The extra features around the pitch can earn you just as many points as goals

You're even awarded points for injuring the opponents. Ho, ho

down for. As well as scoring goals, players can gain points by hitting the ball onto stars on the side walls, reflect the ball off bounce domes, and points are even given for injuring opponent players. The score multiplier also means that your score can be increased by 50% or 100%.

The playing area itself is randomly littered with money, and power-up tokens, which have a limited time of use: freeze opponent team, shield, transport ball, boost stats, and more. There's also the ability to electrify the ball and you can laugh yourself silly as the ball flies through an opponent's goalkeeper—electrifying them in the process—and straight into the open goal. The electrified ball can even go through another one or two opponents, depending on the score multiplayer setting at the time.

The gym is where you can use all that hard-earned money to improve your slack jawed yokel of a team. Areas that can be improved are attack, power, speed, defence, stamina, aggression, and intelligence. It's also a good idea to have a good centre forward as he is always involved in the face off and scuffles. The transfer market is a good way to gain a good player quickly and all kinds of players, of different abilities, appear for sale throughout the game.

Gameplay is fast, furious and fun: the three Fs. Graphics are typically Bitmap metallic and suit the game style perfectly. Sound is also great with bone crunching sound effects and thumping music. One minor niggle is that there isn't a career mode, but then there wasn't for many games at the time.

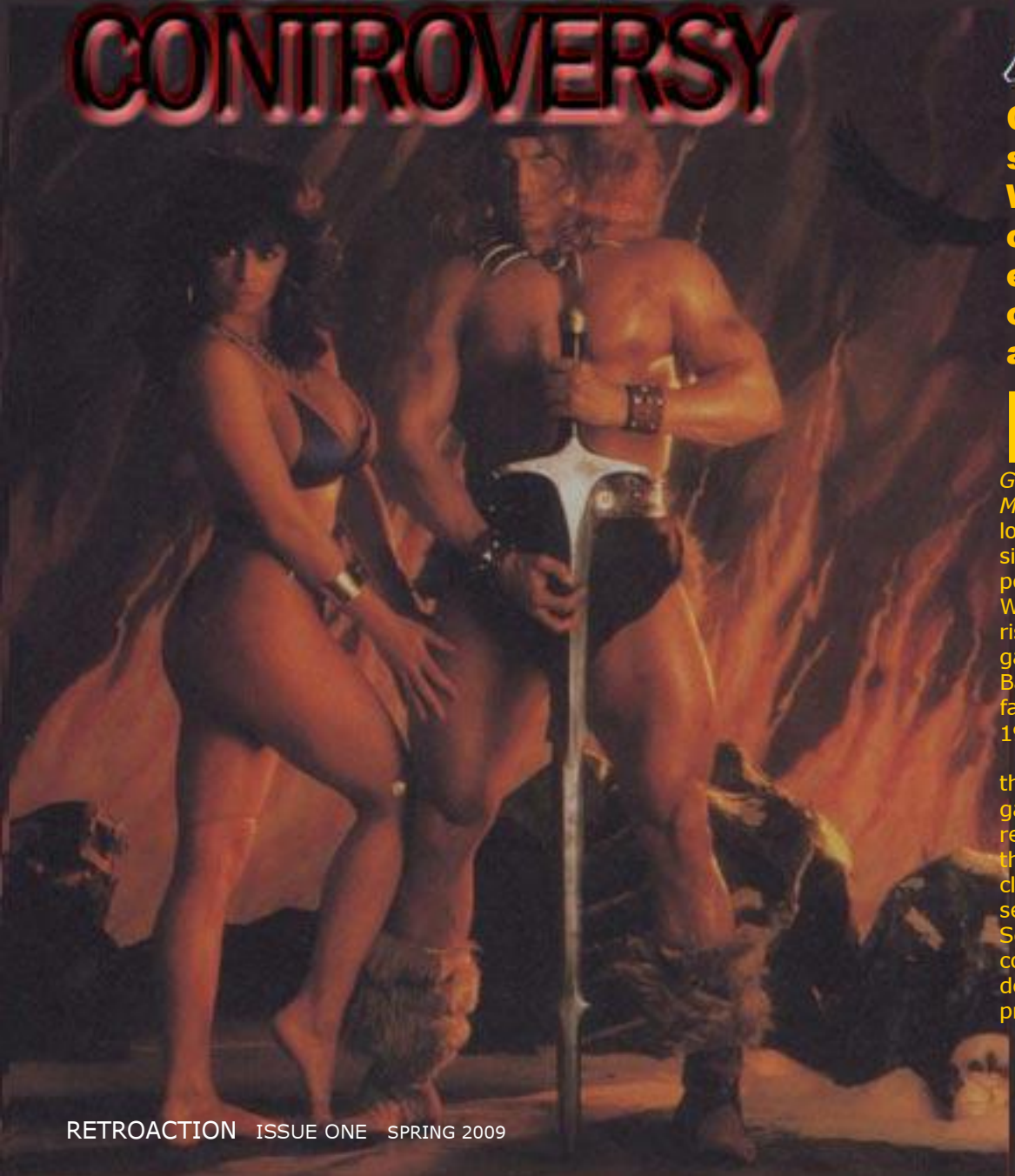
The Amiga, Atari ST, DOS, and Sega Mega Drive versions are barely distinguishable from each other and either version is worthy of a look. The Commodore 64 version, which has inferior graphics, still keeps the great gameplay we all know and love. The game also went mobile as a version for the Gameboy and GameBoy Advance were released. The Gameboy version, while obviously monochromatic in presentation, is still a worthy attempt, while the GBA version is more colourful and polished. The Sega Master System conversion plays similarly to its 16-bit relative, but features slightly inferior graphics and sound.

One of the best games on the 16-bit computers, without a doubt. It retains the basic gameplay of the original, but expands on practically every part of it. The new enlarged pitch makes for a faster game which involves more passing and dodging skills, and the new pitch features add even more variety. As the manual states, the game is "100% bigger and includes a host of new features.... *Speedball 2* is a different ball game."

The new enlarged pitch makes for a faster game which involves more passing and dodging skills, and the new pitch features add even more variety

From top to bottom: Mega Drive, Commodore 64, Master System, Game Boy, and Game Boy Advance

How to cause a COMPLETE CONTROVERSY



BARBARIAN
The Ultimate Warrior

Computer and video games have been the subject of controversy and censorship for years. With the ever-increasing realism, games have come under the spotlight for censorship, and even banning. As Neil Reive discovers, way back on the 8-bit computers, there was a little gem of a game which caused a quite a stir...

Nowadays if you hear the word video game controversy you might immediately think of the *Grand Theft Auto* series, *DOA,* or *Manhunt* games, but there has been a long string of games that have had a similar troubled reception. What could possibly be so controversial in 1987? Well there were quite a few games that risked backlash from retailers and the gaming industry, one of them being Barbarian, arguably one of the most famous controversies from the late 1980s.

Barbarian (known as *Death Sword* in the USA) is a sword fighting computer game from Palace Software and was released on most major platforms from the Amstrad CPC to the Amiga. The classic plot (inspired by the *Conan* film series featuring Arnold Schwarzenegger) has the player controlling a barbarian, who must defeat the evil wizard to rescue the princess. The game is played through various screen locations where two barbarians face off with each other.

A hack-'n'-slash fighting game might not have sounded like such a big deal, but *Barbarian* featured blood (every connected slash of the sword brought a splash of blood), decapitations (one swift swipe around the neck brought the head clean off, which was then kicked out of the screen by an oncoming dwarf creature), and sexism (the female is depicted as the helpless victim). Okay that's pretty bad, but coupled with a controversial advertising campaign, the game received notoriety for its content, packaging, and advertisements.

The real problem came with the promotional photo shoots for the game: a Page 3 girl, Maria Whittaker, was seen wearing nothing more than a skimpy blue bikini draped around the barbarian's leg (Michael Van Wijk, a.k.a. Wolf from UK Gladiators). The shots appeared on the game's

Barbarian featured blood, decapitations, sexism, and a controversial advertising campaign...

HOW TO CAUSE A COMPLETE CONTROVERSY

BARBARIAN: THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

Developer / **Publisher** Palace Software **Released** 1987 **Platforms** Acorn Electron, Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari ST, BBC Micro, Commodore 64, DOS, ZX Spectrum. **Genre** Beat-'em-up

packaging and adverts. There was even a huge sized poster given away with the game. Naturally, this kind of advertising campaign caused outrage from the public.

Popular Spectrum magazine, *Crash*, decided to promote *Barbarian* by having art editor Oliver Frey illustrate two barbarians fighting on the front cover of issue 41 (June 1987). This resulted in a backlash from readers who wrote in to complain and some of the more bizarre ones were published in issue 43's forum under the heading "BARBARITY IN BARBARIAN". "You are dealing with EVIL... I ask you as a very concerned parent and Christian, clean up your mag, refuse to print foul pictures and games, such things are noted in heaven and God will finally bring them into judgement..." preached one Mrs Angela Cook.

Other similar opinions followed with readers cancelling their subscription to the magazine: "I am cancelling my order with my newsagent for your magazine... I am not prepared to subsidise sick artists employed by sick magazines..." stated Philip Raymond Baker. Elizabeth Fox suggested that "perhaps the game, *Barbarian*, is meant to be a spoof on violence, but in no way is that apparent in the cover picture, nor in the semi pornographic picture advertising the game inside the magazine." Lloyd Mangram replied to the letters: "indications are that the issue sold very well, although I have to be fair to everyone's views here printed, and add that representatives of WH Smith have requested that we don't use a cover quite like it again. I think it is largely a matter of personal taste..."

Predictably, issue 44's forum pages contained the *Barbarian* backlash backlash, where readers wrote in replying to the criticism of Oliver Frey and the front cover illustration. Tricia Maynham tells us that her "daughter is squeamish at the sight of blood in hospital programmes, but even she knows that fantasy is fantasy, computer games are computer games, none of it is real or intended to be real, it's all make believe."

What irritated most readers was the religious stance of Mrs Angela Cook who kicked of the letters page the previous month. Chris Eason was "quite frankly disturbed 200 times more by her letter than by the cover itself. It portrayed her as some kind of demented religious hippy." Toby Wood added "not only was she complaining, but she was being biblical with it, which exacerbated the situation. Think of all the gory, horrifying things that happened in the Bible, which I shan't mention 'cos I can't be bothered. (It'll do you all good, anyway, having to search through the Bible for something gory)," and Jon Gajos thought "the fanatical Bible-bashing belt of people could only be found thriving in America."

As Lloyd Mangram stated, "many writers defended Oliver's fantasy on the grounds that it was a realistic interpretation of the game it portrayed—that's probably a dubious argument too—and others on the grounds that it wasn't meant to give offence..." The final letter on the subject was from Paul Naylor: "Honestly though, there are squillions of people around who aren't happy unless they're complaining about the welfare of humanity etc... If they don't like the cover then they can stop buying the magazine, instead, they try to ruin it for the rest of us." "Amen to that," replied Lloyd.

In the 'Censorship Debate' in *Crash* #55, Kati Hamza pointed out that "the advertising... relies heavily on scantily-clad females— who don't... feature very much in the game—chosen only for their sexual appeal.... the image they create is totally irrelevant to the product. Again, it's not the bodies themselves which are unacceptable but the way in which they're portrayed. The implication is

The advertising campaign images. From clockwise: game front inlay, A4 advert, game back inlay, A1 poster

"You are dealing with EVIL... I ask you as a very concerned parent and Christian, clean up your mag, refuse to print foul pictures and games..."

HOW TO CAUSE A COMPLETE CONTROVERSY

BARBARIAN: THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

Developer / **Publisher** Palace Software **Released** 1987 **Platforms** Acorn Electron, Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Apple II, Atari ST, BBC Micro, Commodore 64, DOS, ZX Spectrum. **Genre** Beat-'em-up

that there's nothing more to women than bodies and that all they're there for is sex."

The subject was also brought to the pages of *Amstrad Action* through Emma Broadley's column. One reader who replied, Adrian Forbes, wrote: "I'm sure that people don't buy games for the brilliant poster of marvellous Maria. Why would someone spend ten pounds on a game for a picture of a scantily clad woman when you can buy a pornographic magazine for £1.50 and see her totally nude?" "Surely the point must be that games packaging ought to reflect the game and not totally unconnected illustration," Emma replied, and went on to state that "it is slightly less embarrassing to walk out of Smiths with a [game] in your hand than literature from the top shelf."

Superior Software soon ported the game over to the Acorn Electron in 1988. So when advertisements starting appearing in *Electron User*, some readers weren't too chuffed. Following a letter from J. Clark, complaining that the images were "offensive and particularly insulting to women," a 'Barbarian Starts a Real Life Battle' article appeared in the September 1988 issue, featuring reader opinions, pro and con, regarding the advertisements.

R.H. Hill pointed out that "it is Christian belief that God created human beings in his own image... did not clothe them and was very annoyed to find them using fig leaves in lieu of clothing. Surely to object to the unclothed body is closely akin to blasphemy." L.H. Everith wrote: "this is the third copy I have received through the post in a transparent envelope displaying the most ugly pornographic advertisement by Superior Software. Who knows what my postman thinks—Dirty old man?"

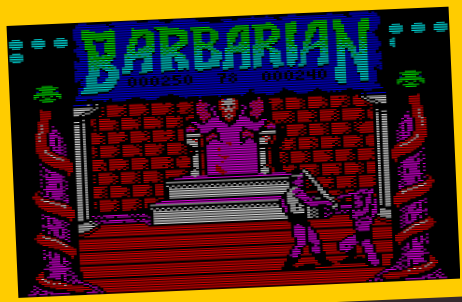
Pak Charoenkul stated "a lot of people are making a big fuss about nothing. The adverts simply show a half-naked woman with her arms round a man. And hasn't anyone noticed that he isn't wearing very much either? And while people are complaining about all this, they have all forgotten about the game itself. It features two massive men, armed with swords, chopping each other to bits. Don't you think that this is what everyone should be worrying about?" However, Robert Rountree was "disgusted" by the adverts, as he had to hide the back cover advertisement ever time he took the magazine to school, as it "is embarrassing."

Richard Hanson, managing director of Superior Software commented "it is interesting to note that about half the comments complain about the advert, while the other half support our use of it. This fits with the feedback we have had from other sources and shows that it is very much a matter of opinion as to whether the advert is in bad taste—or, as we believe, an eye-catching but harmless and amusing picture that captures the fantasy-epic style of the game. Our view that the advert is not in bad taste has been supported by the Advertising Standards Authority."

However, all the publicity didn't harm the game reviews or sales; in fact, you could say that it even helped. As Richard Leinfellner (Producer/Lead Programmer) explained when asked about the controversy, "the game was great, the publicity was also great. In Germany we got banned. It all seems so tame now, but at the time it was rock and roll." While reviews across games magazines noted the issues surrounding the advertising campaign, they concentrated on the polished graphics and gameplay instead.

The sequel, *Barbarian II*, featured a similar advertising campaign: Maria Whittaker as a scantily clad female warrior. This time though the game lets the player choose between the male barbarian and the female princess. After the controversy over *Barbarian*'s sexism, the sequel shows the princess in an equal role. While the controversy surrounding the original game may have faded from many peoples' minds, it's the gameplay that matters most, and it plays great. Still.

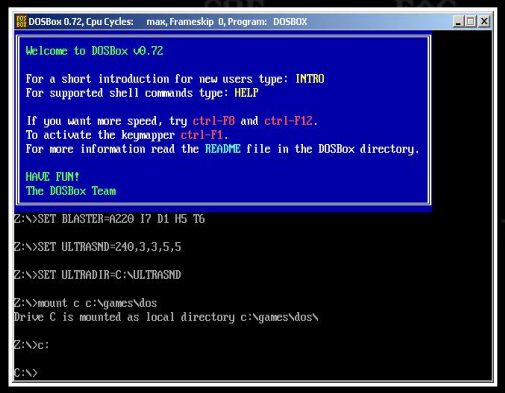
"... In Germany we got banned. It all seems so tame now, but at the time it was rock and roll."



DOSBox

It gave us the FPS, it is the king of strategy, adventure, and more, but it still goes ignored by many gamers. *It* is DOS, and *it* gave us some of the greatest games in retrogaming history. Duncan Rule investigates the ultimate DOS emulator...

If you've ever blown the dust and cobwebs away from one of your old DOS games with the hope of getting it running on a modern operating system such as Windows XP or Vista, chances are you've ended up keyboard-smashingly disappointed with the results. Some will start only to grind to a complete halt when you actually try to play them; some play in absolute silence; and some just flat-out refuse to run at all.


DOSBox 0.72, Cpu Cycles: max, Frameskip 0, Program: DOSBOX
Welcome to DOSBox v0.72
For a short introduction for new users type: INTRO
For supported shell commands type: HELP
If you want more speed, try ctrl-F8 and ctrl-F12.
To activate the keymapper ctrl-F1.
For more information read the README file in the DOSBox directory.
HAVE FUN!
The DOSBox Team
Z:\>SET BLASTER=A220 I7 D1 H5 T6
Z:\>SET ULTRASND=240,3,3,5,5
Z:\>SET ULTRADIR=C:\ULTRASND
Z:\>mount c c:\games\dos
Drive C is mounted as local directory c:\games\dos\
Z:\>c:
C:\>

Mount your DOS games location and you're away...

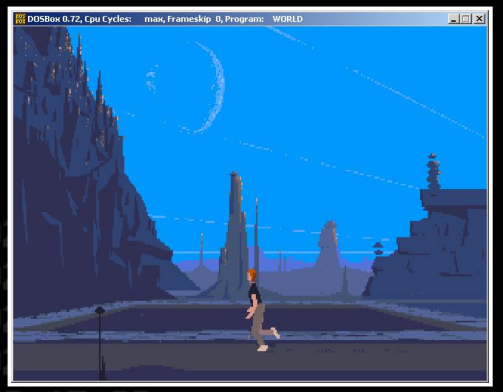
One feature which consoles seem to be striving for is backward-compatibility, and many online services such as Nintendo's Virtual Console give gamers the opportunity to re-live the classics on their shiny new system. Unfortunately, as far as PCs are concerned, the old grey-and-black prompt is dead and buried, and the days of "Shutdown and restart in MS-DOS mode" are long gone. In short, trying to play anything from the time before Windows ruled the earth is a right royal pain in the arse.

But fear not, intrepid retro gamers, for we've been sent a wondrous gift from the heavens (or the Internet). Its name: DOSBox. If you're the sort of person who just can't handle life without halting the Vorticon invasion, or filling Hans Grosse's bloated carcass with hot lead, you'll probably find DOSBox to be the single greatest creation in the history of mankind. With the program recently celebrating its ten-millionth download, DOSBox is the last word in retro PC gaming.

The premise is simple: emulate the architecture of an old Intel x86 PC with your modern powerhouse system. While this is a rather more complex undertaking than the emulation of, for example, the humble NES or Speccy, the power of today's PCs means that it is nevertheless an entirely possible endeavour. DOSBox has a huge community, and is actively worked upon with regular updates. The result is full support for a massive (and continually expanding) selection of DOS games. Recent versions are even able to emulate some of the larger, more resource-hungry games from the twilight of the DOS era, such as those based upon Ken Silverman's fantastic Build engine.

DOSBox presents users with the classic DOS-style command prompt interface we all know and love, and supports many of the original OS's commands. These are, as of writing, implemented at a rather rudimentary level; but the name of the game here is getting the games to run as smoothly and authentically as possible, not to perfectly emulate DOS itself. Still, previous users of DOS will be right at home with the operation of DOSBox, and you'll only need to learn a few new commands to get things up and running. "MOUNT" is the most essential of these; and is the basic command

DOSBox presents users with the classic DOS-style command prompt interface we all know and love...



Discover *Another World* and replay classics like...

... *Wolfenstein 3D,* the influential first person shooter, and...

***Leisure Suit Larry*: a point-and-click adventure, sort of...**

***(Blood)* There's nothing like a spot of gardening to relax. There, pretty as a picture. Aaargh, zombies.**

used to make real directories (or indeed whole drives) on your physical machine accessible to DOSBox.

Unlike many other emulators, which need ROM files or disk images of the system's games, DOSBox simply requires the original game files, which you can pull straight from that old CD or floppy disk you have lying around. The program also supports the ability to mount ISO files or other CD-ROM images as virtual drives, should you wish to do so. Compatibility is seldom a problem, as DOSBox's configuration file can be easily edited to alter the virtual settings for things such as sound cards (card type, IRQ, DMA channel etc.), memory (no more fiddling with EMS and XMS), and available CPU cycles. The program also includes controls to adjust the emulated processor speed in real-time (by values which you can specify), so you can tweak away until you get your game running just right. Alternatively, there's a setting which you can use to get DOSBox to guess the correct speed it should run at for a specific game.

DOSBox is remarkably simple to use. Once you've created a virtual drive with the "MOUNT", navigate to the correct folder using the good old "cd\" command, and run whichever executable or batch file you need. Your game should then start up just as it would on a real machine, and you can get down to the important business of actually playing it. Things like setup programs can be accessed in exactly the same way, so you can get the controls, video and sound options for a specific game exactly as you want them. Full mouse and joystick support are also available for any games that require them, and I've even managed to use an adapted Playstation controller with DOSBox for platformers and such.

If you don't feel like getting your hands dirty, or aren't that comfortable with the workings of DOS or the DOSBox configuration file, there are also a number of third-party frontends available that will give you a nice sparkly GUI to set up and run your games from. Many of these also provide some more advanced features, such as the ability to create profiles (that is, DOSBox configurations) for individual games, depending on your own preferences for a particular title. For instance, some truly ancient games will require a very low CPU cycle count to run at the correct speed, whereas something like *Doom* will require a considerably higher number. Once you've created a profile for your game, it can be started with just a few clicks of the mouse, eliminating the need for any additional tinkering with settings. An overview of the most popular DOSBox frontends can be found at the DOSBox Wiki.

Lunar escapades. and some nuking, with the Duke

I'm sure the question many of you want answered is 'How do the games actually play?' The answer, in my experience, is remarkably well. The PC I use for DOSBox is probably around five years old, and definitely nowhere near the bleeding edge of today's technology. I doubt it was even when it was new. Nevertheless, everything I've tried running on DOSBox has, with a little tweaking and editing of the dosbox.conf file, performed near-perfectly. With the latest release (0.72), I was even able to get one of my latter-day DOS favourites, Monolith's insanely fun *Blood*, running exceptionally well. Unless your system is a real dog, chances are you'll be able to get your own favourites working just as you remember them. If you have a specific title in mind, visit the DOSBox website, which has a detailed compatibility list available for your perusal.

The RPG genre at its best with *Ultima Underworld*

The best part of all this? DOSBox is completely and utterly free, so you won't have to fork over a penny to enjoy all of the features it has to offer. That said, if the guys behind DOSBox decided to charge £100 for the privilege, I'd gladly cough up. That's how good this program really is. If you're feeling generous however, you can also make a donation to the team via the DOSBox website, and do your bit to help keep things running. Not a Windows user? DOSBox is also available for a multitude of other platforms and operating systems, so nobody should feel left out.

If you enjoyed playing the old DOS classics back in the day, or you just want to see what you missed out on the first time around, you owe it to yourself to download DOSBox immediately. In fact, why are you even still reading this? Do it now!

...if [they] decided to charge £100 for the privilege, I'd gladly cough up. That's how good this program really is

PART ONE: THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

Long before *The Matrix* popularised a cyber world co-existence, there was a long running comic strip in the Eagle called Computer Warrior, which involved school kids playing computer games within the computer's realm. Neil Reive ventures into his spacious attic, dusts off his old comics, and relives the first story arc...

Computer Warrior, initially titled The Ultimate Warrior, was a comic strip series that appeared in the Eagle comic from 1985 to 1994. The main plot centred on kids who had discovered the code for the real-life facility in computers and could be play video games for real—albeit within the computer realm. Computer Warrior was initially printed as a one-off story arc, but following its popularity, new plot threads were introduced. Written by Alan Grant (using D. Spence as a pen name) and illustrated by many artists (J.Cooper, I. Kennedy, S. James, and M. Western), the comic strip was a particular revelation for gamers. Not only were there some great action story lines for the reader, but some computer gaming action as well—something which was unheard of from a non-games publication back then. The integration of comic strip and computer games worked wonders for both the comic and the game's publishers who had their product featured in the comic. The comic strip's popularity ensured that it continued right up to the comic's eventual demise in 1994.

Bobby Patterson and Martin French are neighbours and best friends. Martin tells Bobby about how he's been using a real-life facility code, which gains access to the computer's realm, where he has been playing computer games for real. Naturally, Bobby doesn't believe it. However, Martin hands Bobby an envelope stating that he's playing a big game that night and if anything strange should happen then he should open it. The next morning, Bobby goes round to Martin's house only to be told by Martin's mother that Martin has disappeared. She tells Bobby that Martin is not in his room, his computer is still switched on, and his bed has not been slept in. Bobby enters Martin's room and notices the computer screen displaying the message "YOU LOSE." Finding all this a bit strange, Bobby decides to open the envelope Martin gave to him. It reads about how Martin has played the ultimate game and, if Bobby is reading this, he has lost. Martin was now trapped inside the computer and only Bobby can get him out again.

THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR
SPACE
WAR
SPORT
ADVENTURES OF EVERY KIND CAN BE PROGRAMMED INTO THE HOME COMPUTER TO CREATE POWERFUL ACTION FOR ITS USER. THIS STORY FEATURES A VERY SPECIAL COMPUTER.
NEW STORY
YOU LOSE
A LUCKY EAGLE AND TIGER READER IS GOING TO OWN THIS FANTASTIC...
COMMODORE 64 HOME COMPUTER
NEXT WEEK
ZYKLON ATTACK!

SEE, THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN'T DO WITH A COMPUTER— IF YOU JUST KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT DO IT. WELL I'VE FOUND OUT SOMETHING— A CODEWORD. IT...IT MAKES THE GAMES COME TO LIFE!
EH?

Thinking it's a "crazy joke", Bobby plays along, enters the secret code and, as requested by the computer, types in his name and objective: 'Bobby' and 'Find Martin'. The computer displays another message "PLAY ZYLON ATTACK". As *Zylon Attack* real-life loads into the computer, Bobby dissembles from Martin's bedroom, much to his astonishment, and re-appears in outer space inside a gun platform. Before Bobby can get his bearings, ships home in and blow him up, losing one of his three lives. Realising this is quite real, Bobby begins fighting back racking his score up to 4000. However, the good run is stopped momentarily as Bobby loses another life. With two lives gone, Bobby wonders what happens if you lose all three lives: death? With fear as an incentive, Bobby concentrates and builds up his score from 4000 to 10000 and wins the game.

Best For Thrills!
EAGLE and TIGER
24p
The boy who plays Computer Games for real!
JOIN BOBBY FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE IN GHOSTBUSTERS™

He materializes in Martin's bedroom. The computer displays another message: "YOU HAVE PASSED THE INITIATION TEST. DO YOU STILL WISH TO FIND MARTIN?" As Bobby hits Y, the computer explains that Martin lost the Ultimate Game and is imprisoned inside the game's program. Only the power of a Computer Warrior can release him. To become a Computer Warrior you must play and win ten games. Then you will be allowed to take part in the Ultimate Game. "Warning! Failure = death." Bobby tells Martin's mum and his own mum, but neither of them believes a word of it. Bobby realises that he will have to become a Computer Warrior if he is ever going to see Martin again.

Bobby sneaks back into Martin's bedroom at night to begin the Computer Warrior tests. As he turns on the computer, it displays the first challenge: *Wizard of Wor*. Bobby enters the game and fights against the monsters with his disrupter rifle. Bobby continues fending off all on-comers until the Wizard appears from nowhere and blasts Bobby with a bolt of lightning. With one life gone, Bobby realises he must be more cautious and alert. However, as he descends down a lift a monster surprises him at the bottom and dives on him. With only one life left, Bobby battles away until he meets the Wizard again. Cautiously, Bobby waits for the Wizard to appear before zapping him with a direct hit. The first challenge is won and Bobby re-appears in Martin's bedroom.

Martin's mum then walks into the bedroom to see Bobby there. As Martin's mum asks Bobby what he's doing there, Martin's dad also walks in. Bobby tells them that Martin is inside the computer and that he can prove it; he will type in the real-life code. But as he does so nothing happens. Martin's dad escorts him out of the house and tells Bobby not to come back. The next day, Bobby notices the French's binning Martin's computer and games. Bobby rescues

BY THE TIME HE REACHED GAME LEVEL 12, HIS SCORE STOOD AT 89,000 --
ANOTHER WRECK DEAD AHEAD! COMING IN FOR RESCUE LANDING!
PILOT'S WEARING A PURPLE HELMET! HE'S AN ACE — WORTH 2,000 POINTS!

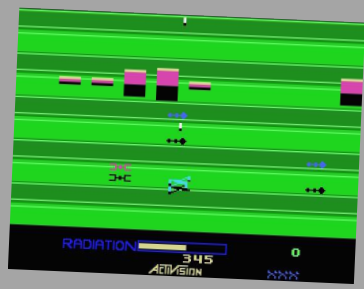
THE GAMES

Zyklon Attack
A fictional game that introduced Bobby to the computer's real-life facility

Wizard of Wor
Game test #1
(1983) Midway

A 1980 arcade game from Midway, and later ported to the Commodore 64, Atari 800, Atari 2600, and the Bally Astrocade.
An action-oriented game for one or two players played from a top down perspective. The game takes place in various maze-like dungeons teeming with monsters. Points are gained by killing the various monsters (Burwors, Garwors, Thorwors, Worluks, and the Wizard of Wor).

Pastfinder
Game test #2
(1984) Activision



Originally developed for the Atari 800, the game is set in the year 8878 and casts the player in the role of a Pastfinder: an explorer and treasure hunter.
At the helm of their trusty Leeper (a four-legged craft) the player traverses a barren alien landscape, while hunting for artefacts from an extinct alien race. With an overhead vertically scrolling perspective the player moves around levels consisting of a variety of obstacles, plagued with the odd homicidal alien craft. Luckily, the Leeper can shoot at any enemy that get in the way.

the computer and the games from the French's bin and sets them up in his bedroom. He types the real-life code in and is given his next challenge to play *Pastfinder*.

However, *Pastfinder* is a newly released game and it isn't amongst the others that Martin has. Due to the last copy being sold from the local electronic shop, Bobby resorts to swapping his bike for a copy. Bobby gets home and activates the game's real-life facility. However, having not put in any practice with the game, Bobby quickly loses one of his five lives quickly followed by another. With Bobby fighting as if his live depends on it, he quickly progresses through sector four and completes the game. As he re-materialises in his bedroom, his parents discover that he has taken Martin's computer and tells him to return it. Bobby manages to persuade them that he's keeping it for Martin when he returns.

When Bobby can safely activate the real-life facility again, the computer asks whether Bobby wishes to speak to Martin. Martin's face appears on the screen and informs Bobby that he is trapped in the Nightmare Zone and only he can free him. Doing a paper round, Bobby acquires some extra money to purchase the new game required for the next test *Rescue on Fractalus*. This time, Bobby puts in plenty of practice before playing the game for real and makes a good start progressing through to level four without any problems. He fights his way up through each level, his confidence gaining as his points increase, and finally wins.

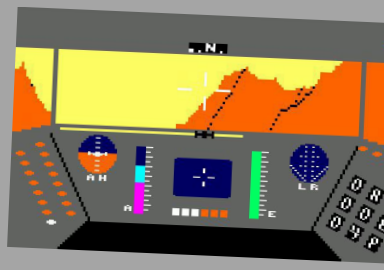
Events take a turn for the worse, though, when Bobby's dad finds out that someone else is using his bike. Bobby explains that he swapped the bike for a new game, which sends his dad into a rage. He tells Bobby to get the bike back or the computer will be binned. Bobby manages to get the bike back—by swapping all Martin's old games that he has played—and keeps the computer.

Bobby fires up the computer for his next test *The Great American Cross-Country Road Race*. Again, Bobby puts the time in to practice the game before playing it for real.

However, when the race starts for real, Bobby is left sitting at the start before finally making a break for it. Bobby quickly speeds through the pack only to slide on an oil slick, losing all the time that he managed to make up. In his attempts to fight back through the crowd of cars, he manages to blow his engine, forcing him to push the car to the next garage. He is then pulled over by the highway patrol for speeding and loses valuable time. Bobby quickly makes up the time though and speeds on. Just as he is upon the finishing line though, he runs out of petrol and has to push the car over the line.

With the previous test completed successfully, Bobby is given his next game to play: *Ghostbusters*.

Rescue on Fractalus!
Game test #3
(1984) Lucasfilm Games



Originally released for the Atari 8-bit family and the Atari 5200 games console. It was also ported to other popular platforms (Apple II, ZX Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Tandy Color Computer 3 and Commodore 64). It was one of the first games from the Lucasfilm Games department. The player controls a space fighter in a first-person perspective landscape on the planet of Fractalus in a mission to land and rescue stranded pilots.

The Great American Cross-Country Road Race
Game test #4
(1985) Activision

A racing game that places the player in a high-performance car participating in races across the US. There are several races that you can choose to complete in from simple cross-country coast-to-coast racing to a more difficult mode, which requires you to visit every city on the map. The game also had several unique features like weather and road conditions (fog, snow, etc.), day and night simulation (night driving, rush hour traffic, etc.), ability to plan the route ahead, refuelling, and even police pursuits.

AS BOBBY KEYED IN THE REAL-LIFE FACILITY –
CONGRATULATIONS ON WINNING YOUR "SUDDEN DEATH" PLAY-OFF, BOBBY... NOT MANY DO.
YOU CAN SAY THAT AGAIN!
IF YOU WISH TO CONTINUE YOUR QUEST TO RESCUE MARTIN... PLAY "PSI FIVE" TRADING COMPANY"
PSI FIVE TRADING COMPANY - THAT'S NOT IN MARTIN'S COLLECTION. MUST BE A NEW RELEASE...
BUT HOW AM I GOING TO GET IT? I'M SKINT, DAD MIGHT FORK UP - BUT IT'S A LOT TO ASK HIM FOR WHEN I'VE ALREADY GOT DOZENS OF GAMES!

Meanwhile, Bobby's parents are called into the school headmaster's office for a chat. It seems that Bobby's work has been slipping badly in the past few months, and with his belief that Martin is trapped in the computer, his headmaster recommends Bobby sees a psychiatrist. To prevent any more bother, Bobby starts the *Ghostbusters* test after his parents have went to bed. Just like the game of the film, Bobby starts up a ghost busting business. The game starts well with a couple of ghosts captured early on, but the third ghost evades capture and slimes one of his team members. The next ghosts are captured with no problems until another misadventure occurs when Bobby and his remaining ghostbuster cross the beams, losing his team member in the process. With a new ghostbusting team, Bobby racks up the ghost captures and contains the marshmallow man before he does any damage. It's off to the Temple of Zuul where they have to avoid the guardian—the marshmallow man—to gain entrance. They climb the stairs, reach the roof and end the game by spelling ghostbusters with their proton packs. The game is won and Bobby is now promoted to Computer Commando.

However, Bobby's parents discover him in his room at his computer, confiscate the computer and insist he visits the psychiatrist. Next day, when his parents are out, Bobby skips school and sneaks back into the house to retrieve the computer from his parents' bedroom. With the computer set up, Bobby begins the next game *Walls of Jericho*. Unfortunately, Bobby had no time to practice and quickly loses two lives through clumsy mistakes. Bobby quickly learns from these mistakes and continues on the game winning through grit and determination. The sixth test is won. Bobby appears back in his bedroom

Ghostbusters
Game test #5
(1984) Activision

Designed and programmed by David Crane. The game's plot is loosely based on events from the film. As one of the Ghostbusters, you have to rid the city of all ghosts and keep the psychokinetic levels as low as possible. You begin with a set amount of money and have to set up the business. If one of the buildings begins to flash then that's your cue to go and do some ghostbusting and earn money.

Walls of Jericho
(fictional game)
Game test #6

Desert Fox
Game test #7
(1985) U.S. Gold

Driving a supertank, the player has to obtain strategic command over the territory of the war torn North Africa. The player battles through five expansive campaigns—fighting against enemy tanks, planes and avoiding minefields—to defeat the Nazis's top general Rommel (a.k.a. The Desert Fox).

Next day at school, Bobby sells off some old games in an effort to get some money to purchase the next test game Desert Fox. Later at home, Bobby practises his newly purchased *Desert Fox* game, but unknown to him, his father—who has learnt of his truancy—is at home and bursts into the bedroom. He threatens to put and end to all this nonsense by smashing the computer with a hammer. Bobby, by a whisker, manages to grab the computer and runs to a friend's house where he hides the computer. While firing the computer up, it gives Bobby a chance to see what awaits him if he fails: The Nightmare Zone. There he meets Martin who is being chased by a knight horseman, which promptly kills him with a three-pronged lance. They exchange a quick word before Martin is chased away by a swooping Wingzapper.

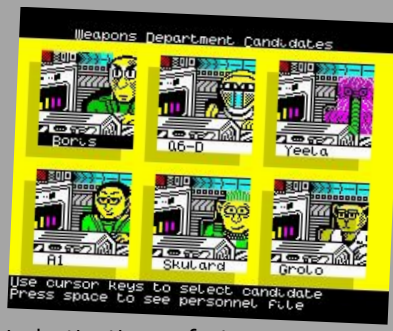
Bobby begins the seventh test, *Desert Fox,* promisingly, steadily battling his way through the war torn desert taking out enemy tanks, planes. There's only one enemy Bobby fears and that's Rommel, the 'Desert Fox' himself. But with the only way to avoid him being a minefield, what is Bobby to do? Bobby carefully negotiates through the minefield only to have Rommel waiting form him at the other end. Rommel quickly opens fire, disabling Bobby's tank, followed by several more hits. Bobby can't respond quickly enough and loses the game, condemning himself to the Nightmare Zone.

In the Nightmare Zone, Bobby is chased by robot hound dogs and eaten alive, only to slowly return back to life for the torment to continue. Bobby soon loses track of the number of times he has died. He soon meets up with Martin, who tells him that there is a way out through the "Sudden Death" game, which the computer picks. Bobby challenges the computer to the Sudden Death and appears in western game called Shoot Out. Bobby quickly progresses through the game and succeeds, earning the right to return back to reality and to his quest to become a Computer Warrior. With the whole ordeal of the Nightmare Zone Bobby has been away over night and his parents were worried. Bobby explains that he ran away over the fight with the computer, but decided to come home. His parents forgive him and allow the computer to be returned to his room.

When he goes to collect the computer from his friend's house, he quickly fires it up. The computer congratulates Bobby in passing the Sudden Death game and informs him that the next challenge will be *PSI Five Trading Company*. Having not got enough money to buy the game, Bobby walks into his local electronic shop on his way home with his computer in a plastic bag and has a quick play of the demonstration game. Upon finishing the demo play, Bobby realises that his computer is gone and has likely been stolen by a punk who was nearby. Bobby tracks the thief down to a nearby café, confronts the punk and takes off with the computer.

Shoot Out
(fictional game)
"Sudden Death" game for Bobby.

PSI-5 Trading Company
Game test #8
(1986) Accolade



Taking the role of the commander of an interstellar cargo ship—crewed by a host of quirky aliens—the player's mission is to get supplies delivered to their destination as fast as possible. This may have proved easy enough if it weren't for the space pirates just waiting to ambush the ship. It's here where the player must decide whether to fight off or attempt to evade the space robbers.

Uggabula
(fictional game)
"Once chance freedom" game for Martin.

Silent Service
Game test #9
(1985) MicroProse

Set in the Pacific during World War II, the player assumes control of a US Navy Submarine. Following the attacks on Pearl Harbor, the player's mission is to carry out war patrols against Japanese shipping. The game allows the player to choose when to attack and a whole range of realistic tactics are available, including the End Around as well as near invisibility at night (if the sub's profile is kept to a minimum).

Back at home, Bobby sets the computer up just as his father appears. He explains to Bobby that instead of forbidding the computer, he is going to take an interest in his hobby and gives Bobby a present: *PSI 5 Trading Company*. As Bobby starts up the game for real, he is introduced to his crew and the mission begins. Bobby manages to progress through the game smoothly with no major events and completes the mission.

Meanwhile, in the Nightmare Zone, Martin stumbles away from killer giant crabs and falls into a "one chance tunnel". A one and only chance to win his freedom, and he must choose a game by spinning a game-wheel. The spinning wheel stops at Uggabulla, a caveman game where he must trek across dinosaur infested land to bring back an everlasting flame for the tribe. Unfortunately, on the brink of success, Martin fails and is sent back to the Nightmare Zone.

EAGLE
26p
THE INFILTRATOR IS THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN STOP THE MAD LEADER'S PLAN FOR WORLD DOMINATION!
THE INFILTRATOR IS BOBBY PATTERSON WHO HAS TO BECOME —
THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR

Back in reality, Bobby—now promoted to Computer Commander—gets ready for his ninth test: *Silent Service*. Bobby makes a steady start and progresses through the game well. Later in the game, his submarine takes a hit and he is forced to dive deep. With the destroyer ship firing depth charges from the surface, the submarine is a sitting duck. However, Bobby has a plan and jettisons oil and debris to the surface. The enemy believe the submarine has been destroyed so they leave, allowing Bobby to re-surface and sail home to victory.

For the tenth test, Bobby enters the *Kung Fu Master* game. His progress is sluggish through the inhabited levels and he soon loses a life. When he loses his second life, Bobby begins to fight like he's never fought before. His hard work is soon rewarded with an extra life. Using his newfound confidence, Bobby battles through the later levels and completes the game successfully.

Back in reality, the computer informs Bobby of the Ultimate Challenge: he must play *Infiltrator*. Borrowing the money from his father, he buys the game and puts some practice in. The Ultimate Challenge is on Bobby's mind so much that he is told off in school for not concentrating and is knocked down by a bus on his way home. As Bobby recovers in hospital, the computer calls out to him in his fevered dreams. He wakes up and heads back home to play the game. Through determination and a little bit of luck, Bobby completes the game and becomes a Computer Warrior.

Back in the Nightmare Zone, Martin is having a bad time when the (newly introduced) Computer Warlord summons him. The great Computer Warlord escorts Martin away from the Nightmare Zone to where Bobby—in full Computer Warrior costume—is waiting. Declining any further feats offered by the Warlord, Bobby and Martin are sent back home. Having returned to reality, Martin vows never to use the real-life facility again. Bobby agrees, after all, he's been gone for months, and he should figure out what he's going to tell his parents—they're hardly likely to believe that he's been trapped inside his own computer all this time, are they?

Kung Fu Master
Game test #10
(1985) U.S. Gold

A 1984 arcade game developed by the Japanese company Irem Corporation. The player takes the role of Keiji who must rescue his girlfriend, Sylvia, who has been kidnapped by Mr X. Keiji can move left, right, jump, duck, punch and kick and enemy weapons such as knives can be kicked away. With its five levels of side-scrolling floors, full of enemies and an end of level baddie, the game feels very similar to Bruce Lee's Game of Death's finale.

Infiltrator
The Ultimate Challenge
(1986) U.S. Gold

Developed for the Atari 8-bit family, Apple II, DOS, Commodore 64, Nintendo Entertainment System and ZX Spectrum by Chris Gray Enterprises. The player takes on the role of an ace pilot, as he has to fly a helicopter, land at enemy bases, and infiltrate compounds to stop the "Mad Leader". The game combines first-person helicopter simulation with an isometric third-person espionage adventure where you can use false documents to fool the enemy and use spray and sleeping gas.

School yards across the country were once rife with arguments over who had the best conversion of a particular game. We set the record straight, settle the score once and for all. Join Mark Hall as he puts the Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, and ZX Spectrum versions of *Space Harrier* head-to-head in a bid to find the definitive conversion...

The original 1985 arcade game by Sega featured a hydraulic mounted cabinet, which moved around in relation to the player's joystick movements. It was a real crowd stopper as this represented the most realistic arcade simulation for the time. Coupled with large speakers blaring out the sounds of the battles, you could almost lose touch with reality.

You play a space hero who is on the "scene" to save Dragon land from the evil creatures that occupy it. You must run and fly through the many object-strewn levels... oh, and defeat a dragon at the end of each section. A multitude of objects, both on the ground and in the air, come flying at you. They include flying boulders and faces of rock, mutant dragonflies, and butterflies. The levels are all in third person perspective with some great landscapes and graphics. So how do the home computer conversions fare?

SPACE HARRIER

Developer Sega/Elite **Publisher** Elite **Released** 1986 **Platforms** Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum **Video clip** YouTube **Genre** Shoot-'em-up

GRAPHICS

CPC: So it lacks the filled sprites of the Spectrum or C64, but it's by far the best looking version. Succeeds in capturing the look and feel of the arcade original.

Spectrum: The Speccy version is instantly recognisable and despite the limited colours, the whole thing zips along at a good pace.

C64: Full screen blocky graphics with ill-defined colour, but it still holds together very well. Once again, the pace of the game holds true to the original and everything looks and feels authentic.

Draw: CPC, C64.
Runner up: Spectrum

SOUND

CPC: Authentic music plays throughout, with super sound effects, especially when firing your weapon.

Spectrum: Unless I'm playing the wrong version, sadly there is hardly anything to report here.

C64: The SID chip once again deserves a standing ovation; the music sounds as good, if not better, than the arcade original, and the sound effects do a bloody good job too.

Winner: C64
Runner up: CPC

PLAYABILITY

CPC: Fast, furious and in-yer-face action all the way. If the CPC version lacks anything it's the arcade cabinet and moveable seat. Forget about the vector graphics, once you start playing, you won't be able to put this down.

Spectrum: There is no doubt the Speccy version is fast, but the graphics tend to get a bit messy, and spotting enemy fire can become a game of chance rather than skill.

C64: Sadly, too many corners were cut, and boredom—nstead of the oomph factor—quietly creeps in.

Winner: CPC
Runner up: Spectrum

THE WINNER: Amstrad CPC

So the Amstrad CPC draws first blood despite the graphical problems. The programmers have proved that graphics don't always make a good game. The CPC wins because everything feels just right: you can see the enemy charging towards you, and the animation and speed of the main sprite work for you rather than against you. Quite simply a brilliant conversion.

(Spectrum) "Fast, but the graphics tend to get a bit messy..."

(C64) "Sadly, too many corners were cut, and boredom creeps in."

(CPC) "Fast, furious and in-yer-face action all the way."

Amsoft

Mention Amsoft, and games such as *Bridge-It* and *Roland on the Run,* to any retro gamer and they will probably laugh at you. However, as Richard Goulstone looks back, without Amsoft the Amstrad CPC might not have been anywhere near as successful as it was...

Alan Sugar understood that for any new computer to have a chance it had to have plenty of software at launch and soon after - other computers, such as the Jupiter Ace and Einstein failed due, in part, to the lack of software. To this end, Amstrad set up Amsoft: a dedicated software publishing house who also produced the official documentation (including the famous Soft 158). The urgent need for software for the new computer meant that, in the beginning, they were after quantity, not quality. Amsoft canvassed software houses, big and small, and even individual home based programmers to get as many titles as possible. As a result, some truly bad quality games got published, such as the mentioned *Bridge-It*. However, as time went by and the independent software houses started to produce games, the quality of Amsoft titles also went up. Notable software houses that provided games to Amsoft were Ocean (*Hunchback*), Durrell (*Harrier Attack*), and Virgin Games (*Sorcery*).

Amsoft was unique in that, as well as games, it also produced many educational and business titles. The latter was especially important, as serious software developers are usually the last to get on-board any new system, so it was critical that Amsoft brought out word-processors, spreadsheets, databases, etc., to try and tap into the business market. And, of course, mention must be made of the Amsoft blank disks, which were always of the best quality (over the years I have personally purchased many

Notable software houses that provided games to Amsoft included Ocean, Durrell, and Virgin Games.

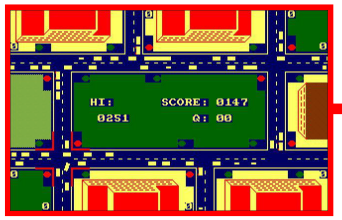
hundreds of them).

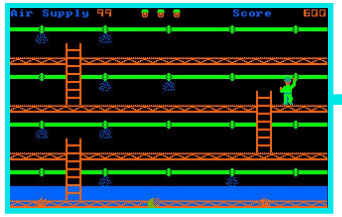
The company also dipped its toes into magazine publishing with Amstrad Computer User (subtitled 'The Official AMSTRAD Mirco Magazine') when the first issue was released in August/September 1984. The first couple of issues were not made available to the general public - only to members of the Amstrad User Club. Content in these early issues included news, Overview (a look at the CPC464), Q&A, software reviews, listings, programming, and more. Early games reviews included Amsoft's very own *Roland in the Caves, Roland on the Ropes,* and *Oh Mummy* - the Roland games series being named after Roland Perry: Locomotive Software (the Amstrad CPC's BASIC operating system programmers) supremo.

Amsoft did eventually produce and distribute some really good games; titles such as *Sorcery+* were among the best games ever made on the Amstrad. The worst ended up as freebies, given away in a ten pack with each new machine purchased. I doubt if many of these were ever loaded more than once.

An interesting aside that has been recently discovered—some titles were only produced and released in certain countries. For example, Amsdraw was recently purchased off the Spanish eBay. To the best of my knowledge this was only sold in Spain, it was certainly not advertised in any British Amsoft catalogues that I have ever seen. Rare Amsoft games are much sought after now and can sell for over 20 quid each on eBay. My current collection numbers just over 100 titles, which covers everything that was ever released by Amsoft in New Zealand, and many that I have had to 'import' from the United Kingdom.

After a couple of years, Amsoft ceased production and distribution of software, as by then the Amstrad CPC was well established and every man and his dog was bringing out games for it. It still continued to produce the magazine and other documentation for a number of years. To me, Amsoft will always be the number one Amstrad CPC publishing house.





Amsoft selected softography

1984

Bridge-It	Epicsoft/Egypt
Fruit Machine	Paul Aitman
Animal Vegetable Mineral	Bourne Educational Software
Roland in Time	Gem Software
Astro Attack	Ian Beynon
Amsgolf	Computersmith
Graf Spee (Admiral)	Temptation
Overlord 2	Remy Herbulot
Quack A Jack	Paul Shirley
Harrier Attack	Durell Software
Roland Goes Square Bashing	Durell Software
Roland on the Ropes	Indescomp
Sultan's Maze	Gem Software
Roland Ahoy!	Computersmith
Roland on the Run	Epicsoft/Egypt
Roland Goes Digging	Gem Software
Roland in the Caves	Indescomp

1985

Alien Break-In	Romik Software
Airwolf	Elite
3D Boxing	James Software
Traffic	Andromeda
Alien	Argus Press
Alex Higgins World Snooker	Gem Software
Oh Mummy!	Gem Software
Roland In Space	Gem Software
Sorcery+	Virgin Games
Splat	Incentive
Subterranean Stryker	Insight
Laserwarp	Mikro-Gen
Hunchback	Ocean
Jammin'	Tasket
Spannerman	Gem Software
Super Pipleline II	Tasket
Beach Head	U.S. Gold
Blagger	Alligata
Catastrophes	Andromedia
Cyrus II Chess	IC Software
3D Stunt Rider	DJL Software
Doors of Doom	Gem Software
Pyjamarama	Mikro-Gen
Fantastic Voyage	Edmonds Software

1986

Spy Hunter	Choice
Golden Path	Magic Logic
Nuclear Defence	James Software
Qabbalah	Gem Software

Sensible TRAIN-SPOTTING

Developer Sensible Software **Platform** Amiga **Download** Cover disk image **Genre** Puzzle

The excitement of wearing anoraks, sitting on dubious benches, drinking from Thermos flasks, pointing at trains and jotting down their model numbers from the comfort of your bedroom

You can't get much weirder than train spotting and you can't get more wonderful than Sensible Software. So what do you get if you put them both together? Gnome finds out...

Choose life. Choose a job. Choose a starter home. Choose a fucking big television. Choose dental insurance, leisure wear and matching luggage. Choose your future. But why would anyone want to do a thing like that? Simply choose to go with Sensible *Train Spotting* instead. No, really, heroin is most definitely not a viable option.

Sensible Software—the very same studio that created such timeless masterpieces as *Sensible Soccer*, *Mega Lo Mania,* and *Cannon Fodder*—did actually bother coming up with a short, sarcastic and quirky Train spotting simulation game back in 1995. One whole year before *Trainspotting*: the glorious cult movie with the glorious cult trailer, taught everyone outside Scotland (and, well, the UK I guess) that Edinburgh had more to it than a lovely medieval centre, that Scots have an excellent sense of humour and that Brits in general tend to amuse themselves by looking at trains. Oh, and yes, it was an excellent film, one of the best ever actually, but I digress.

Sensible Train-Spotting, you see—the first ever train spotting simulation and the premier digital offering that let you live the excitement of wearing anoraks, sitting on dubious benches, drinking stuff from Thermos flasks, pointing at trains and jotting down their model numbers from the comfort of your bedroom—is this article's subject and the sole reason I won't even mention the movie's brilliant soundtrack; or the equally brilliant toilet scene. The game, yes.

Well, it was released as a cover disk for the *Amiga Power* magazine—issue 53, September 1995 to be precise—probably as a joke, definitely as a quirky freebie and apparently as a timeless, well, thing, as you can nowadays download it for free from the Hall of Light. It is thus an Amiga game, or to be fair to it, it's a humorously pointless Amiga game, that puts you, the absurd retro gamer, in a digital representation of a railway station (complete with platforms and station paraphernalia) and tasks you with identifying various trains as they pass by, while appropriately crossing them out of a card/checklist thingy located on the bottom of the screen. There's also a time limit to make things tougher and a penalty for crossing out wrong trains. When all trains in the checklist have been crossed out, the game moves on to the next more difficult level, and frankly that's all it does. Brilliant!

Oh, and *Train-Spotting* sadly was Sensible Software's last original game and that long awaited Rock 'n' Roll sim failed to materialize, it was intended (according to Stuart Campbell at least) as a little "thank-you" farewell gift to the company's many fans. Signature Sensi pixel-art graphics do help strengthen the nostalgia factor quite a bit mind.

Oh, oh, there's the A99. Don't forget to cross that off from your card

Hurrah, that's all the trains from this card spotted. On to the next one...

The 2003 Rip-Off Train

In 2003, a company called Demon Star released *Train Tracking*. It was nothing more than an exact copy of Sensible's *Train-Spotting*, featuring the exact same game mechanics and screen setup and only changing the graphics (for the worse). No mention of the original game was to be found and no royalties or at least respects were paid. Thankfully justice has in a way been done, as you will no doubt discover by following this link.

GAME OVER